

IRISH WRITING

THE MAGAZINE OF
CONTEMPORARY IRISH LITERATURE



Edited by
DAVID MARCUSS
and
TERENCE SMITH



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THE editors of IRISH WRITING would welcome contributions from Irish writers all over the world and are especially interested in new writers of Irish birth or descent.



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FOREWORD



THE reception given to the first issue of IRISH WRITING has justified fully our endeavour to seek out and to present whatever has "pride and plume" in contemporary Irish literature.

In this category we are happy to include the work of writers who have only begun to make their way, and in placing their work side by side with that of writers of widely recognised gifts, we hope to encourage them to more sustained flight. So in this issue we have introduced a number of such writers and at least one new one.

We regret that owing to the proverbial uncontrollable circumstances we are unable, after all, to welcome our guest-poet, Dylan Thomas, in this issue, but we hope to include his poem later.

Thanks are extended to all those writers, readers, subscribers, and friends who sent in congratulations for and criticisms of our first issue.

DAVID MARCUS.
TERENCE SMITH.

NOTE: Owing to a recent order of the British Board of Trade, this issue, and probably future issues, of IRISH WRITING cannot be put on sale in Great Britain or Northern Ireland. Copies, however, may always be obtained by post, direct from the publishers. It would be impossible to acquaint all our cross-Channel readers of this new restriction, but readers in Eire can help by informing their friends in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, by passing on their copies, or by taking out subscriptions for them. Our present subscribers outside Eire can help in the same way.

The delay in the appearance of this issue was due to our prolonged efforts to overcome the restriction referred to.

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JIM PHELAN



Happy Ending

IT came as a shock, of amusement and embarrassment combined, when I realised that I'd forgotten my mate's name. My own mate! Twelve years we'd been around, on and off, doing things, going places, sometimes starving and sometimes taking it easy, often separated but always coming together again. Then to forget his name! With him not six feet away, at the same lodging-house table, having his breakfast. Funny.

We'd met first in the stokehold of a dirty little coasting steamer, out of Waterford for Glasgow. I didn't belong to her, was just working a passage because I wanted to get to Scotland. Her skipper was a meanie; working your passage with him meant working your passage.

So there I was, feeding coal, feeling as if my heart's blood was running away in sweat, only stealing a breath now and then when the Irish Sea stood the little steamer on end just for fun. A bit lonesome too, and that was the worst part.

I'd got round to reckoning that I'd paid my fare eight times over, in shovel-slugging, and was just ready for a life-sized row, when they sent down another fireman. Working a passage he was, too. They'd saved him, slyly, until I'd be finished. A meanie, that skipper was.

That's not quite what my mate and myself called him, next evening in Glasgow, as soon as we were safely on the dockside. Not quite. The second passage-worker was my mate, and he wasn't going anywhere in particular either, just places, a tramp the same as me, working a little when compelled but preferring just to move along.

Right from the first minute we took to one another, and the first morning ashore, when we'd walked out to the edge of Glasgow, we stopped at the cross-roads gossiping away like two kids, for the best part of an hour. I was going to Edinburgh and he was going to Ayr—at least that's where we reckoned we were going—and the roads split just beyond the city.

More like a pair of schoolboys we were, instead of two six-foot tramps. An hour by the sun we stood and yarned, about

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nothing at all—maybe you've noticed that all the best talks are about that kind of thing? Then in the long run we both changed our plans and went on to High Bonnybridge.

As far as I can make out, the only possible reason for our going to High Bonnybridge was that it kept us on the same road for a day or two. We talked about working in the big brickfields there, but down at bottom it was only an excuse to keep together. That's the kind of mates we were.

It seems funny to say it, and no one but a tramp will understand, but sheer laziness and very little else kept us working for weeks in the Bonnybridge brickworks. We weren't going anywhere, we didn't want to do anything, we liked one another; so we stuck around and worked in the brickfields.

The morning we left—six weeks we stayed; six paydays—one big tough ganger had the shock of his life. Well, gangers had to be tough, in those days anyway, over thirty years ago. But that ganger had reckoned only one of us would quit. Besides counting that it was fairly safe to pick on *me*.

I'd hurt my right hand two days earlier, and it was hanging loosely, my mate doing most of my work as well as his own. Using shovel as well as pick. If you've ever watched two navvies at work, one resting while the second picks, then the second resting while the first shovels, you'll see the kind of mates we were.

Of course, in the ordinary way the ganger wouldn't have been such a fool as to pick on a fellow like me. But my right hand was really smashed up a good deal, and he knew. So he got nasty. Chucked words about, then chucked his weight about, then like a simpleton hauled off to slug me when I told him about his mother.

So that was the end of our High Bonnybridge job. My mate went through that ganger like a jet of steam in a snow-drift. Best part of six weeks' wages we had, each, so naturally we weren't sorry to see the last of the brickfield.

We stayed in Carlisle, until we were broke. Tramps don't go anywhere, when they have money. Unless—well, I suppose a tramp who had regular money could just keep going on and on. I don't know. Tramps don't *have* regular money anyway. We stayed in Carlisle.

The morning outside Carlisle, where the road split, we stood and yarned just the same kid-gossip, like we'd done outside Glasgow. I had an idea of going over to Newcastle or one of the Tyne ports, because I'd heard the boats for Sweden and such places went out from there. My mate was headed for Barrow-in-Furness, but I'd been to Barrow and what was the

use of that. So we split off, grinned and said so long, and I headed off for the East Coast and the Tyne while he kept straight on towards Lancashire and Barrow.

It was over three years before I saw him again. I'd been here and there, and met an Irish-American in Marseilles who said there was going to be a pipe-line made, up from Le Havre to Paris way, by a Yankee Company. French labour mostly, he thought, but there would be plenty of Americans as well, and of course a few Irish. I snigged myself out of Marseilles pretty quickly, and was on to the job, a few kilometres from Le Havre, two days later.

It was no surprise at all to run into my mate on the first day. The fact is, I'd had that very idea in mind. It was the kind of place you'd find him—and there he was. We worked together from the start, and anyone who listened to our gossiping would have thought we were weak-minded, but we weren't. We were just two tramps who liked one another.

The sun was getting strong and the grapes were nearly ripe when we decided, together, that we could no longer endure such treatment. Something about the food it was. The foreman knocked my mate cold in the row. He nearly knocked me cold, too, but I managed to get one in on him, so there we were, out on the road again and no job. Good money though. It lasted nearly a month.

We didn't feel like splitting off that time, and we went to work for a French farmer. The pay wasn't much, but we knew we weren't staying and didn't care. Often at night, liking the cheap red wine, we'd laugh and say that if only we had this few francs every week, without having to stay in the same place, we'd be kings. But that's the snag about having regular money. People want you to work for it, and that means staying in the same place. So a tramp never has any.

That French farm was nice, and so were the people, but of course we quit presently, one morning when the road looked lonely without a man on it, as my mate used to say. We parted from the farmer, friendly enough, and drifted our way down to Toulon. My mate was going somewhere in Africa, but I thought for Italy myself. So that time it looked as if our paths wouldn't be crossing any more.

They did though. Back in England, at the tail-end of the first big war, I found myself of all places in the world on a mine-sweeper. And there was my mate, with a few weeks service on the same boat. Talk about the long-lost brother, the Prodigal Son and the rest! No relatives in the world ever

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made such a fuss of one another as we did.

The money was good there—of course with the offchance of being blown sky-high about eight times per day. Not that we cared about the danger. Nor about the money either; it never counted for much with my mate or myself. The cold fact was that we liked being together, even on a trawler fishing for live mines, any one of which might be her last catch.

That spell didn't last long, though. I got a little drunk in Grimsby one night, and reached the dockside about four hours after the sweeper had left, with my mate on her. So there I was, a deserter no less, but the war ended soon and no harm done.

I went here and there for a bit, and fetched up in Dublin a couple of years later—casual dock-labourer by description. That meant shovelling coal, as fast as any machine, unloading a coal-steamer.

Casual was the right word. Because on the second morning another casual came down into the hold, carrying a new shovel and looking around as if he expected someone. My mate again.

He'd been to Australia and back since the war, besides tramping up and down England, and just then he'd walked down from Derry. Right to the quayside where I was working.

It made us both feel partly frightened and partly religious; that's the way we put it. One thing was pretty plain—we were never going to be split up again. There can't be many pairs of mates like that.

His coming put me on to an easier job, on the quayside instead of shovelling the coal. I was made sing-out man. This is just a man who signals to the crane-driver, when the big coal-tubs are going up and down. It doesn't look much of a job, but in fact the sing-out man carries all the limbs and lives of the gang in his hand. This is because the crane-man is away aloft, to one side, and can't see where the big tubs are going to or coming from. He can only see and hear the sing-out man.

Seven and a half hundred-weight of steel those tubs were, with a ton of coal in as well. The sing-out man had to be all alert, I can tell you. That's why I was put on the job; I was always pretty quick on the uptake.

Good job I was, too. Halfway in the third day, my mate had come up on the quayside, and started across to speak to me. Right into the open space, with one of those tubs coming down—from heaven you'd think, the crane took them so far aloft on their way out.

There was my mate walking under it, and I just ready to

make the down-sweep of my right hand that would tell the craneman to let her come. He laughed for a minute, at the funny jugglings I did with my hands, and then we laughed together when we saw that my hand-juggling had sent that coal-tub swinging away into safety, instead of cracking him like a black-beetle.

I knew what he'd come for before he spoke. There was that innocent kind of genuine-grievance look on his face, that always tells when a drifter feels inclined to go drifting some more. So I got my coat and hat and we went for our few days' pay.

Lazing around in Dublin was pleasant, but we had very little money. We stayed in a big lodging-house while the few pounds lasted, and were just about ready to move off when this luck of ours came.

A fellow in the lodging-house had been in the mine-sweeping service a few years earlier, the same as us. Now there he was with a pension. A pension! Money for just drifting! We shot round to an office, to commence enquiries, as fast as two prospectors who'd heard of a new goldfield.

It was only after we'd studied the first lot of forms that we realised I was out of it. I'd dirtied my nest by missing the sweeper that time—no easy money for me. But we reckoned my mate was all right, and we started to chase the forms and certificates and records, to get that money-for-nothing if it could be got.

It meant staying in Dublin a while, so I scrounged around a few friends and shook the necessary out of them. It went against the grain a bit, but we had to be in one place, and have an address, while the papers and formalities were going through. We managed, with a bit of a struggle, and at last the thing was fixed. Two pounds a week. That's what my mate was to get, on account of his having been wounded slightly. Two pounds a week!

Needless to say, this looked like Golconda and El Derañó and all the rest combined, to us. No pair of tramps in the world, as far as I knew, had ever had two pounds a week between them before. Not real drifters, no. If a tramp had five shillings a week, or even half-a-crown a week, he'd be in clover I tell you. Now here we were with two pounds. It may sound a small sum, but no millionaire on the Riviera ever had such a good time as we were going to have, I knew that.

My mate knew it too. In the days before the first payment was due, he often laughed with me about our opulent plans. I don't know what we *didn't* plan to do with that money. The thought of two pounds a week, always coming along no matter

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where you drifted, was enough to make any two tramps drunk without liquor.

Then the last night came, and the next day was to be the first pay-day. Going up to bed, we reckoned things over and decided that we'd stay in Dublin for a couple of weeks, then move on. Bristol I thought, at first, but my mate must have had a nasty patch in Bristol some time, for he flared up immediately and we decided against it.

Not that it mattered. But I felt angry with myself for trying to have it all my own way. Because it was pretty plain I'd done it all wrong, by mentioning Bristol, from the way my mate glared and looked sideways. I guessed something thoroughly unpleasant must have happened to him there, so I just laughed and said the world was wide. After a second he laughed too, and the thing was done with. But the look in his eyes had been funny, like I hadn't seen anywhere before, and I was glad when we got back to yarning over old times.

Next morning we were about early, and both in top form. No more talk of Bristol, I *needn't* say! There was one funny thing happened, while we were at breakfast. Nothing wrong, or unpleasant, or anything like that. Just funny.

Something about a newspaper it was. I'd made some joking remark about the newspaper on the table, and in a second we were at it hammer and tongs, my mate glaring murder at me, and each of us contradicting everything the other said. Then we laughed, because neither of us knew the first thing about the newspaper in question anyway. Not a thing.

It was just afterwards that I had the shock. Asking my mate to pass the pepper, I found I'd forgotten his name. Forgotten his name—with him sitting at the same table! I didn't say anything about it though; somehow I thought it wouldn't do. But I still couldn't think of his name, when we'd finished breakfast and gone walking down Dublin. Not a bit of it.

It was only about eight o'clock, and the office for the money wouldn't be open until ten, so we just walked along, down by the river. We passed the bridges, and went on down the quayside where the ships were, taking it easily and not in any hurry anywhere.

Once I noticed my mate looking from side to side, up the narrow streets, and I pulled his leg because I reckoned he was looking for a pub and they wouldn't be open for hours. Then a bit farther down river I saw him glance up a lane again, and nodded my head towards a lavatory on the quayside, guessing that was what he was looking for. He stopped short, and

for the tiniest split-bit of a second his eyes were strange.

It frightened me, no less. The whole think didn't last as long as while you'd knock the ash off a cigarette, but I'd seen the look and it frightened me.

I know the bleakness of a bluster-bully's eyes, when you've called his bluff and he knows he's for it. Besides, I've seen the backward glance of an escaping convict when the gun-trailing warders were on his heels, and I've seen the eyes of a trapped traitor, when the boys have come for him at midnight.

A *hunted* look. That was what was in my mate's eyes, that morning on Dublin riverside. But it went as quickly as it had come, and next minute we were grinning together, as we watched a big coal-steamer being unloaded, almost at the same berth where we'd been working a few weeks before.

The new sing-out man on the quay remembered us, and shouted some joking remarks about gentlemen of ease, while he waved and twiddled his hands for the craneman far away aloft. We grinned back and waited, while a full tub came up from the steamer's hold and swung away across to the quay.

I must have slipped in a pool of oil. That would be it; there *was* a pool of oil, just by the edge of the quay. Down I went, looked like being hurt, too, and grabbed my mate's legs to save myself. He made a grab for me as we went down together, probably trying to save me from getting my clothes all mucked up with the oil. Down he went in front of me, cut into the open space.

That's nearly all. The sing-out man had just made a down-swooping movement of his right arm. Answering it, the tub of coal came whizzing, out of the sky it seemed. Seven and a half hundred-weight of steel, with a ton of coal inside it, dropping down on to that open space.

Cracked like a black-beetle. Finished, the same as when you put your boot down on a worm—squelch.

Bob Flarrity, my mate. Poor old Bob. I remembered his name, the minute that tub of coal came down.

PATRICK GREER



The Frog

WHEN he was wandering alone he was content. It was the summer holidays and there was nothing to do in the country place where he was staying. That was the way he liked it. The lazy hours, the smell of decayed leaves in the woods, and the secret pattering of rain when he sat sheltering beneath a dense growth of laurels.

He knew all the land and the different walks around the house thoroughly now. There was always a sense of quiet expectancy when he was out alone like that, which was never dissipated by familiarity or the uneventfulness of these wanderings.

It seemed that he was the only one who really knew these trees and the particular features of the bog, its treacherous softnesses and the silver birches which grew there. Because nobody else thought it worth while to wander about like that. It pleased him to think that in turn the trees and country around knew him and accepted him. That's ridiculous, he told himself. It's because I'm alone I think like that.

Sometimes he played with his cousin. But she was having riding lessons on a well-behaved horse and hadn't much time to waste either. He knew her parents wanted her to mix with nice people when she grew up.

The thought might come of some of the fellows at school during the term and perhaps he'd wish that one of them, Tom Allan for instance, was with him at that moment. Then he found himself having an imaginary conversation with Tom Allan. He could show him different things like the odd-looking burrow which might be a badger's. Or an oak tree, a hawk, anything at all.

From time to time he thought about the skeleton of the frog. Then he remembered Mr. Alyward telling the class about it one afternoon.

He saw Mr. Alyward, a little man with glasses and black hair which had turned grey. The hair was always parted in a straight line down the middle, smoothed and even with some

dressing. In comparison with the boys and the other masters he looked well brushed, polished and dapper.

He was perched in front of the class, his short legs supported by a chair, with a volume of "The Romance of Famous Lives" open on his knees. There were stories in the book about everyone from St. Francis down to Henry Ford.

"Sir John Lubbock (1834-1913)," he had written on the blackboard in a rapid perfectly formed script. His hands were brown coloured like the skin which forms on baked rice and the nails as clean and as carefully tended as a woman's.

He read how certain ants attack and enslave other ants. And of those which march in a relentless disciplined mass, allowing no obstacles to stop them and eating their way through the carcasses of dead animals.

"We used do that too when we were kids." He reached out and tapped an inattentive head with the book.

"If you leave a dead frog for instance, in an ant's nest and come back in a day or two the flesh is all eaten away and you have a perfect skeleton fit to be put in a glass case."

He took off his glasses to polish them. "Yes, Gregory. A beautiful skeleton of a frog. Clean and neat and waiting to be labelled."

Mr. Alyward's picture of the skeleton remained and he might think of it when the ground squelched beneath him in a soft part of the bog.

He had found an ant's nest in the sandy bank of the front lawn and he dropped some sugar amongst them and watched the white grains being pushed about in the brown crawling mass.

"Pismires," the gardener had called them. "Crawl up your leg and sting you." He held them in his hand and pressed them gently but couldn't persuade them to sting. He found a dead dragonfly in the road and dropped it in the nest. In time he returned and inspected the feather light remains, the long body hollowed out and holes where the eyes had been. He began to dislike ants. He had never been able to find a dead frog.

He was in the garden plucking leaves from a black currant. They gave off a pungent smell, like the smell of cats, when crumpled up. The rain had stopped and there was nobody there. A mist rose in steaming clouds from the soft ground, the air was filled with the odour of soil, manure and flowers, and the wet grass glistened in the sunlight. He was conscious of the sun stirring the sodden earth.

The wet leaves of an overgrown, neglected strawberry bed licked his shoes into momentary brightness and just in front of

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his foot the plants stirred with sudden activity. He bent quickly to part the leaves and a frog jumped off from under his hand. He caught it and carried it to the grass plot. It was cold and wet and he felt its soft body jumping impotently in his cupped hands.

When he opened them the frog was sitting up in the palm of his hand as if he didn't know what to think. Its sides pulsed in and out evenly and the frail body looked almost transparent. Getting ready to jump, he thought, and he remembered the story of Jenner in "Famous Lives" who discovered the circulation of the blood by examining a frog. He saw Mr. Alyward's clean rice-skin hands. The frog sprang suddenly and fell in the grass. It seemed a bit dazed and it paused before hopping off. He watched it making towards a row of gaily coloured sweetpea and he ran and captured it before the final jump into the safe obscurity of the flower beds.

It doesn't know what to make of things now, he thought. He tried to imagine the feelings of the frog caught up in this bewildering calamity and he didn't himself feel strong or powerful as it couldn't even defend itself by biting. It sat in his hands with protruding unblinking eyes, its sides going in and out and its mouth clasped and silent. He held it higher and waited for it to jump.

It hopped off slowly. He dropped it several times. Let it go, he told himself, and he was annoyed because it wouldn't die easily without any fuss or unpleasantness.

There was a rain barrel at the bottom of the garden and he held its unresisting body beneath the water for a minute. It came to the surface. He noticed now a slight kick brought it half across the barrel, and the grace of its outstretched limbs in the water like the glide of an accomplished swimmer. But there was no vigour in the stroke. It lay floating with outstretched legs and didn't attempt to scale the slimy side of the barrel.

There was a need now to test the degree of his baseness, to see the beautiful form of the skeleton revealed by the thousand minute tearing mouths of the ants.

Selecting a stone not too large to smash the bones he carried the frog back to the grass plot. He turned away as he lopped the stone on it and he thought it gave a single strange cry. He dropped down beside it and he wanted the business to be over and finished with. The eyes were still open, staring, and there was no noticeable mark on the limp body. It didn't move.

The garden was quite still, the steamy heaviness weighed

on him. His shoes and stockings were sodden from the wet grass. Suddenly he started up with a feeling of fear and shame when he thought he heard a mocking call, as though someone who had watched him all the time had given a derisive shout. He glanced towards the far hedge. It might be the gardener. He didn't wish to investigate.

He stared at the squashed frog with an empty feeling of self-disgust.

Picking it up he hurried to the barrel and knowing it must be dead he dropped it in the water, half hoping for the miracle, the graceful kick and glide of the living body.

It floated lifeless, and when he stirred the water it turned over showing the helpless tender pale belly. Tiny red eel-like creatures leaped frenziedly around the body on the disturbed surface.

He took it out, carried it slowly to a distant corner of the garden and covered it over with dead leaves.

For a day or two he didn't feel inclined to go wandering in the woods or through the surrounding country.



EWART MILNE



The Cobbler Who Lost His Shoes

Every day of every year
To my narrow house in the market square,
From morning until evening comes
They bring along the shoes they wear—
People and things, people and things,
Their burden is old shoes to mend.

And how shall a man in the market square
In his narrow house with old shoes to mend
From morning until evening comes—
How shall that man ever breathe the air
Of guessed-at skies before his graveyard yawns?
People and things, people and things.

There's never a day, there's never a year,
But I cobble their shoes both worst and best
From morning until evening comes—
Yet none has brought me what I lost,
The slippers gay I used to wear,
My golden shoes with silver wings.

If someone stole them it was unkind
To grieve my life with such distress
From morning until evening comes—
My burden is old shoes to mend,
Beneath the clutter they leave behind
I've lost my winged, my golden shoes.

But faith, I'll come upon them yet, and then
With butterflies and honeybees
From morning until evening comes
I'll skim the topmost boughs of trees:
I'll steal across the silent moon,
I'll prance to greet the shouting sun.

(For permission to publish the above poem acknowledgments are due to Frederick Muller, Ltd., who are including it in a new collection by Mr. Milne, Bodiny Day, to be published by them this year).

FRANK PIETERS



Timber

WHEN the tree fell the black dog leaped from the boss's feet on to its trunk and wagged its tail. The cutters stood up with slow expectancy, waiting for the boss to speak. "How many this morning?" He spoke accusingly.

"Six, sir."

He turned from them as they wiped the fir-oil from the saw, and stared about the wood. The long hillside was thick with standing timber even after three months' cutting. Sunlight filtered through the pale treetops and speckled the shady ground. Here and there the oil on a fresh-cut stump glistened; the air was resinous.

A horse toiled up the slope to them, dragging chains, urged by a shouting man.

"You should have more than six down, Ben," challenged the boss sharply.

The newcomer, a hard-faced fellow, pushed his cap back quickly.

"Well, Mr. Merrick, we're at it all the time. Some o' these trees are big. They take an hour— isn't that right, Jockie?"

He turned to the smaller cutter, his voice authoritative, expectant. Jockie shook his head in sad smiling correction of the boss, and looked appraisingly along the fallen trunk.

"They're big trees," he said.

"We can't do any more, Mr. Merrick."

Ben searched in his broad shirt-front for a butt, his deep-set eyes narrowed at the boss.

"We'll be here two years at this rate."

The boss looked about him again, censure in his silence. Jockie began to file the saw-teeth, his good-looking, small-featured face bent low over the work, the attitude of his body one of guarded waiting. After a while the boss turned back to them. His eyes brightened with conscious humour.

"How long would you say, Mull?"

The older cutter glanced quickly at him and away from him, a swift shy smile on his rugged face. He had a cleft palate,

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and a lump on the top of his head which his hair no longer covered.

"T'won't take no two years, sir." The words came shyly, humorously, with nasal indistinctness. The others smiled to themselves.

"Better help with the loading."

The boss went on up the hillside with the dog. Its head was level with his thighs. The three men headed slithering down the slope, steadying themselves against the trees. Jockie looked back. His attitude was jaunty now. He muttered something and they arrived at the river bank grinning.

The timber they had cut and hauled down was piled in a burnt clearing above the rocks, and men were working there. A black barge floated close inshore. They added their strength, dragging logs across the clearing, straining back on the ropes as the logs rumbled and slithered down the rough chute to the hold. They worked quietly, expectantly. The boss returned and stood beside the chute watching them, his hand playing idly with the dog's ears. The men spoke occasionally now, warning one another to go easily, to be steady. The sun blazed down; an easy sweat greased their faces, and their shirts clung. When the barge could hold no more all but the three woodsmen slipped down over the rocks and clambered aboard.

The boss went over to the pile before he left.

"There should be another load in this," he said, "we had a load a week in the spring."

"I don't know, Mr. Merrick, unless the fellows around here are taking them." Ben groped in his shirt pocket again. "Anything can happen here after five o'clock."

The boss went aboard.

"Cut six more after dinner," he called, as the barge chugged out into the tide.

"After dinner, by God," said Jockie when he had a fire going. Mull pulled onions out of his pockets and dropped sprats into the flames. Upriver Ben started another fire among the brambles to form a new clearing; the dog trotted back before him. A salmon yawl came across the river and the oarsmen hailed them. They came and sat by the fire.

"Any spars going?" asked one after a while.

"Take the whole bloody lot," said Jockie, "we're all right as long as we have a load for this day fortnight."

Mull nodded his head, looked at the fire.

"'Tis equal to us," he said vigorously through his nose. He glanced at the fishermen and looked away again quickly. They were staring at his deformities. They sucked blades of

grass and leaned back on their elbows and looked up the slope through the trees.

"Merrick got the wood cheap," remarked one.

"Trust him," said Ben. "Three fifty he paid for it, and he's made four hundred out of it already, building houses."

"He made more," said Mull.

Their eyes were hard as they chewed.

The dog passed the fishermen and one raised his hand. A deep snarl was the reply. The man tensed slightly.

"That's a treacherous devil," he said.

They looked at the dog. Jockie plucked a sprat from the fire.

"Ay," he said, "and the trees in this wood were supposed to be rotten. Here!"

The dog came over to him and he squeezed its jaws. It whined and whined with pain. He released it.

"Good old Blackie," he said, and it wagged its tail.

"That dog would kill an' thing," he told the fishermen, veiled exultation in his eyes.

"How many spars are you thinking of taking?" Ben asked after a while.

He went with the visitors to the pile, and they pulled out three fir limbs. Jockie followed them over.

"Them limbs will be handy for ye," he said.

"We'll stand ye," one of the men assured him, "we'll see ye in town a Saturday night."

"Tis nothin' to us," said Jockie, and walked back to the fire.

"Clancy and Farrell from up the back," he announced when the men had gone.

Mull poked the fire.

"You'll see them fellows no more."

Ben's eyes narrowed.

"I'll see them."

Mull rose to his knees to give force to his difficult speech.

"The fellows round here are all the same." He pointed a finger vigorously at his mates. "Look at the Dalys, all we gave 'em and all the pints we were to get. And what happened?"

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The others did not answer him. He threw a few sticks on the fire then lay back and folded his arms behind his head.

"You must live with me before you know me."

The sun shone down, the afternoon passed, and they lay and smoked. Sounds from the hamlet above the wood came soft and distantly, and the river flowed smoothly down below them. Once Ben went up to see the horse; later he went to see the clearing fire; the others dozed.

At five o'clock they rose and got their coats and set to work extinguishing the fires. Above the wood were corn and hay fields, their scattered owners stooping in the sun. Some of them raised idle arms to the woodsmen when they emerged from the trees and passed them, walking along the ditches to their cart on the road to the estuary town.

That evening when the sun had gone the owners left their fields. Some went home; others dropped their tools against a ditch and went into the wood. They were not alone. Halfway down amongst the trees a grey-haired woman walked slowly by, bent under a sturdy limb. Down in the clearing an old man pushed weakly at the pile of logs, moving slowly round it, peering. When the newcomers arrived he paused in his search and stared uncertainly at them as they approached. They greeted him, chose a length of larch and bore it stumbling up the hillside. The salmon yawl arrived and chafed against the rocks and the two men loaded her. The old man left the pile and found a limb to suit him; soon the grey-haired woman came down and together they lifted it and went away through the darkening trees.

The wood was quiet then. Late in the night shouting from across the river wakened a cottager. The shouting continued, and he went outside. The sky above the wood was aglow. Quickly the people left their cottages and hurried down to the river. Downstream along the curving bank the wood was aflame, and up the slope fire raged in the undergrowth. They watched in their helplessness. One thought of the crops above the wood and some ran up; others stayed and stared. Towards morning a breeze came from behind the wood and the fields were saved. The blaze died down, but for hours afterwards prostrate timber whitened in the breeze and no one could approach.

That day, when the workers were in the fields, Ben and Jockie and Mull drove out and found the boss waiting beside his car. They walked with him to the top of the slope. It was a silent morning, and there was little to see. Here and there

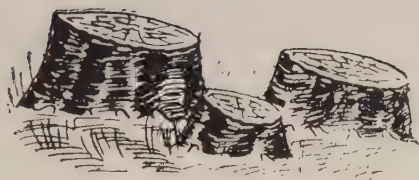
FRANK PETERS.

on the black waste below them an ugly half-trunk stood scorched and lifeless. The air was burnt.

After a while the boss went down the slope alone. The men in the fields looked up and saw him go. One of them went and spoke to the woodsmen, but they were uncommunicative, and merely shrugged.

When the boss returned, and the sound of his receding car had died away, the workers left the fields and hurried home for their saws. Then they went down into the waste.

The three woodsmen stood together, silent, watching.



MARY LAVIN



Posy

HANNAH ran to the door of the room at the back of the shop where her brother was stiffly bending down unpacking the crate of china that had come from the station that morning.

"Daniel, I think you'd better come out to the shop."

Daniel looked up.

"Why?" he asked. "Can't you stay there another few minutes; I'd like to get this crate unpacked before supper."

He thought she was just getting tired of standing behind the counter. Hannah was the one that kept house. She seldom went out into the shop and they didn't press her. She was just as well out of it. She hadn't a good manner with customers. They thought her slow; not like Kate. Kate always liked the shop. When she came in from school as a girl she used to run behind the counter and begin to wait on people straight away without even bothering about her dinner. And now after forty odd years it was the same story. Hannah often had to come to the door six or seven times before she could get her to go inside for a meal. There wasn't a plate in the house, according to Hanna, that wasn't cracked and discoloured from being too long in the oven trying to keep things hot. But this was the Day of the Annual Assizes, and Kate had been trying all day to get an opportunity of going down to the courthouse to have a look at the new judge. She had just gone about ten minutes although it was likely that she would be late. It was some months since this new judge had been appointed but this was his first time on the petty sessions. He was young for his age and there had been a great deal about him in the papers. It appeared that he was the youngest judge on the bench, and furthermore, although he had reached the top of his profession it was hinted that the top of one profession was not enough for this young man, and that the political and even the literary world would make a place for him before his career went much further.

"They say there is no knowing where he will stop," said Kate, whose interest in the social column dated from early

girlhood, when she used to have the newspaper spread out on the counter in front of her to pore over whenever there were no customers in the shop.

The new judge, even before his present appointment, had often featured in the social gossip. His family had some not inconsiderable importance in the city; they were a long established line that had rendered many services to the state, for one of the most recent of which a knighthood had been conferred on the head of the house. This was not however the young man's father who had been the younger son, but nevertheless the Julian Pennytons were said to be worth three times the Roger Pennytons and in a position to have bought out a title several times over had such a step not been beneath the contempt of the real genius of the family, Julian Pennyton's lady, the mother of the new judge. It was she who was said to have been the guiding star of both families because it was after her advent into it that a line, always distinguished, took on a new dominance in society by reason of a rapid succession of lucrative transactions for which, unlikely as it had seemed at the time, the young inexperienced wife of Julian was responsible. Unknown to her husband, who had married her out of hand in a fit of infatuation that had never left him, she had evidently had a head for such things. Certainly, whatever about this, there was no doubt that she had a face for other things. Julian Pennyton's wife had been the most conspicuous beauty of her day.

It was hardly any wonder that Kate Dogget should be anxious to avail herself of an opportunity to see this woman's son. And so, when the court day came around Hannah had agreed to stay in the shop.

"Hannah will give you a hand in the shop," Kate said to Daniel.

Daniel had shaken his head.

He knew Hannah. He knew just how long she would stay in the shop before she'd think of something to be done inside and after that he would be as good as alone until Kate came back. And court day was always busy, with so many country people in the town as well as a number of strangers.

I knew this would be the way, he thought, when he heard Hannah calling him.

"Just a few minutes more!" he said, trying to be patient. "Just a few minutes, till I get this crate unpacked and then you can go where you like."

But Hannah did not go back from the door, instead she stepped into the store room, and something impatient in her

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walk, in spite of her limp, made him look up.

"Why didn't you come when I called you?" she said, in a quick irritable whisper.

"What is the matter?" Feeling the urgency in her voice, Daniel got to his feet clumsily.

In spite of being on the wrong side of forty, and unmarried, Daniel was not much cramped by rheumatism but anyone knows that it's hard to get to your feet suddenly when you've been on your knees on a damp floor. As a matter of fact, Kate and Hannah boasted about how well-preserved he was, and having in mind the general application of the phrase to the fig, the prune, or better still the bean or the lentil, it was undeniably true and descriptive of their bachelor brother. The sap was gone out of him.

"I didn't think you wanted me for anything in particular," he said apologetically to Hannah. "I thought you were just tired of standing behind the counter."

"That too!" said Hannah curtly, "but that's not why I called you, although indeed Kate might have stayed at home and still have satisfied her curiosity."

"I don't understand?" said Daniel.

"Well you soon will," said Hannah. "I mean that the new judge is coming down the street and I saw him stop one of the children playing about in the gutter as if he was asking the way to somewhere."

"Well?" said Daniel impatiently.

"Well!" said Hannah, "the child put out his finger and pointed straight at this place!"

At once Daniel grasped the significance of being called.

"Why didn't you say that at once?" he said, and he began hastily to brush off the sawdust that clung to his black serge suit. "He's probably outside in the shop by this time."

"Why didn't you come when I first called you?" said Hannah sulkily. "It's a queer shop he'll think it is with no one behind the counter!"

But before the last words were out of his sister's mouth Daniel had reached the door of the shop, and there, like a cat that had wet its paws, he gave a quick shake to each skinny leg to rid himself of the last suspicion of sawdust, and then went forward with a businesslike smile.

The Dogget shop was not very large; it was nevertheless one of the best concerns in the town, and the only hardware business. Furthermore the stock in the shop represented no more than a fraction of the goods that were stored in the large sheds of corrugated iron that ran around the four sides of

the big yard at the back of the premises. The shop itself was only a small square room with a single window and a single counter, but even this small space was so crowded with stock that there was room in it for no more than a small number of customers at a time. It was not unusual for customers to have to wait their turn in order to get into the shop at all.

This morning when Daniel ran out from the store-room, however, the shop was empty, or so he thought for a moment, because in addition to using all available floor space, the low ceiling of the shop was also used for the storing of goods, and from innumerable hooks and nails in the boarded ceiling there hung down buckets and cans, rolls of chicken-wire, wicker baskets, hanks of meat skewers, saucepans and clusters of saucepan lids, and indeed a hundred other articles which having handles or perforation of some kind permitted of being thus strung up out of the way. And as a matter of fact it was not until, happening to glance upwards at these articles, among which there was a bundle of circular shaving mirrors, that Daniel was corrected of his error in thinking the shop empty, for to his astonishment as he gazed upwards, his eye was caught by the quizzical eye of a very tall young man who was reflected not only in this particular mirror but in every one in the bunch, until in a moment it seemed to Daniel that the shop must be filled with elegant young men in morning suits leaning on the silver heads of tightly furled umbrellas and all of them with amused expressions on their faces.

Daniel hurried out to the centre of the shop, where after all there was only one young man; a young man who promptly transferred his eyes from the reflected to the real Daniel, without however appreciably altering the expression in them.

"I see I was told no lie," he said easily and affably. "I was told there was nothing I wouldn't get in this shop." As he spoke the young man's eyes took in the plough shares and harrows, the cement-mixers and other articles too big for display inside the shop which he caught sight of in the yard outside.

But Daniel was accustomed to some surprise upon the part of his customers when they saw the extent and variety of his stock, and so his habitual remark came glib to his tongue.

"Ah yes," he said, "we try to keep a large selection of goods." He looked around him with a self-satisfied look, but as he did so a sudden feeling of uneasiness seized him, and out of the corner of his eye he stole a glance at his customer.

What could possibly be the requirements of a young man so elegantly appointed and so perfectly equipped with all the accessories of a gentleman? Then, as if the young man read

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his thoughts he smiled again.

"Yes," he said, "a very large stock indeed, and so I have every reason to hope that you will be able to supply me with the commodity of which I have come in search!"

"And that is?" said Daniel, his curiosity getting the better of his obsequiousness.

The stranger looked steadily at him.

"Information!" he said, and he began to smile again.

"Information?"

The unexpected word had fallen upon Daniel's ears with the paralysing effect of a word uttered in a foreign tongue, but imperfectly as he had comprehended its syllables with his ears, he felt vaguely uneasy.

Apparently, however, the feeling was completely unjustified. The young man was merely enquiring the whereabouts of some people he knew outside the town. He had made enquiries elsewhere, but he had been directed to come here.

"Oh certainly, certainly," said Daniel, as soon as he understood this; his readiness to assent being all the greater for his previous disquiet. "I'll be glad to give you any directions I can," he said. Then suddenly he recollected that it was the day of the Assizes. "Just a minute!" he exclaimed. "Better still. Maybe you may care to save yourself a journey? If so it is possible that some member of the family you have in mind may be in the town to-day. We can make enquiries." This was a situation after his heart. "They may even be customers of my own," he said. "If you would care to step into the parlour I could make some investigations. And the name?" he said "I didn't catch it, sir?"

The young judge smiled again.

"I didn't mention it," he said, "but as a matter of fact there is not much use making enquiries in the town. I think the people I have in mind are long gone out of these parts altogether. All I want to see is the cottage where they used to live, or the remains of it, because even the cottage I think must have tumbled down long ago." The young man paused for a moment to see if his words awakened any greater curiosity on the dull, dried up face of Daniel. The long face had certainly come marvellously to life in the last few minutes, but not with any greater curiosity than that which a stranger always arouses in a slow-moving and monotonous place. "The name," said the young man, "was Mallows."

For an instant this time it seemed as if the thin pale lids of the shop-keeper faltered, but the insipid expression did not alter in the pale watery eyes.

"I knew people of that name all right," he said evenly. "There was a big family of them. Were you interested in any one of them in particular?"

The young judge shot a penetrating glance at the old bachelor. Was there a bit of an edge in his voice as he asked that question?

"Yes," he said, then. "I was particularly interested in one of them. Her name was Mary; Mary Mallows."

"Oh, Mary?"

There was no mistaking the contrast between this voice and the voice that had asked the other question. This voice was not only unconcerned, but even impatiently so.

"Did you know her?" said the young man.

"Mary Mallows?" Daniel thought for a moment. "Well, I can't say that I did," he murmured. "I suppose she was one of the Mallows from the cottages in Meadow Lane, but I don't seem to recollect a Mary among them."

"Meadow Lane!" exclaimed the stranger. "Yes, that would be right. She lived in a place called Meadow Lane, Mary Mallows of Meadow Lane: I often said it was like the title of a song."

"It must be the same Mallows so," said Daniel, drawn into the topic in spite of himself. "I thought I knew them all, but I don't recollect a Mary among them. No, I don't recollect a Mary." He shook his head. "Of course there was a very big family of them. She may have been one of the ones that were before my time. Still, I ought to have heard something about her. Let me see. There was Ellen; she was the oldest I think. She was like the mother of them all. Their poor mother was worn to a shadow after bringing the lot of them into the world. Ellen got the full job of bringing them up. Then there were two sons that went to America, and there was another son named Roger that died. No, I'm wrong there. Roger went to Australia. It was Bartlet that died. And another poor girl named Bessie. She was drowned in the river when she was only a young girl at school. Then there was Judy. She was in service with cousins of mine, but she isn't with them any more. She saved up a bit of money, I believe, and bought a shop. They say she's a wealthy woman now. Then there was Tod and I don't know what became of him; he was a bit wild. And there was Bridget. She was in service with a bank clerk that used to be in this town, and when he was made manager down in the south he took her with him. That's the lot of them I think." For the briefest possible moment the old bachelor's voice halted. "Except one," he said then hastily. "It wouldn't be her you mean?" But before

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there was time for a reply, with a completely unexpected irritability he answered his own question. "Anyway her name wasn't Mary," he said, and his jaws set firmly upon the matter.

Was it the judge's imagination that made him fancy it, or did the old fellow's face colour? A perverse impulse came over him.

"What was her name, so?" he asked, and as he did so it crossed his mind that, odd as it was for the old fellow never to have heard of Mary, it was odder still that he himself had never heard of this other girl. Sketchy as was his own knowledge of the family; a knowledge founded only on hearsay, he still felt it unlikely that he should not have heard some mention of this other member. Yet he seemed to have as much difficulty in placing her as Daniel had in placing Mary. Still, that was nothing; he had never heard about Tod, with whom even Daniel did not profess to have been well acquainted. A bit wild, was he? The judge smiled. The family failures had never been given undue prominence when Mary Mallows narrated the family chronicle. Was this girl another of the black sheep? He felt a curiously puckish impulse to uncover another of Mary Mallows' small vanities.

"Who was this other girl?" he said again insistently to Daniel. "What was her name?"

This time however Daniel was decidedly irritable. It took every ounce of his respect for the professional classes to enable him to conceal his irascibility.

"Oh, she was of no account," he said briskly. "She used to work here for us." He paused for a moment and then he rushed on with a sudden unnecessary vindictiveness. "She used to scrub the floors," he said, "and scour the pots."

At once the younger man was alive to that vindictive undertone. What was the cause for rancour such as that? He fixed his eye on Daniel.

"Her name?" he said quietly. "What was her name?"

Daniel's thin characterless face trembled slightly from the strain of an unaccustomed obstinacy.

"We used to call her Posy," he said then suddenly, and the trembling in his face became all at once painful to watch.

"Posy?" The stranger was taken aback at the strangely intimate pet-name.

"Yes, Posy," said the old bachelor. "It least that was what we began to call her here, and the name stuck to her. It sort of suited her. As a matter of fact it was me that first called her Posy," he said sheepishly.

Posy. All at once, as if a faded flower pressed in a book should suddenly swell with sap again, and breathe again, and

quiver again with life, the pet-name Posy was no sooner uttered upon the air than it brought back so potent a memory of the young Mallows girl that some softening of the heart seemed to take place in the old bachelor.

"When she first came to work for us I didn't know what she was called," he said. "There was always one of the young Mallows in service with us. Before Posy there were several others of them. I forget their names. I believe the wealthy Judy used to scrub for my mother at one time. And poor Bessie that was drowned, was often sent up after school to run messages or carry slops. There was always one of them about the place. I never took much notice of them. They were all alike as far as I could see, stready and dirty most of the time; meek as milk when you met them in the passages, and as saucy as brass monkeys when you'd meet them in the lanes at night. God help you if you had the misfortune to take a short cut through Meadow Lane. It was torture to pass that cottage in the dark. Half a dozen of them would be sitting in the dark at the doorway and they'd whistle and catcall at you all the time you were passing. And the giggling! They could see you as plain as if it was daylight. I used to say they had cat's eyes that could see in the dark, but you couldn't see them, and it made you feel kind of foolish you know, because the next day you wouldn't know but that the very one that was serving up your meals to you was the one that was boldest and sauciest in the dark the night before. I declare I never knew them apart;—until I took heed of Posy. I called them by the first name that came to me. They'd answer to any name. Judy would do for the lot of them! Or Bessie. And my mother, God rest her, never called any of them anything but Young Mallows. It was I gave her the name Posy. I don't know what she was called at the font. But after a while everyone in the town called her Posy. Even when her hair grew again she was still called Posy, although I used to think afterwards that it didn't suit her so well then. And she didn't like it either when she got older.

"How can I be dignified with a name like that!" she used to say to me.

"Why don't you change it?" I used to say.

"A lot of good that would do in a mean little town like this. I'll never get rid of it till I get myself out of here."

"Sometimes she used work herself up about it."

"It is your fault," she said one day. "It was you began it."

"I only laughed at her."

"It wasn't my fault that you got ringworm, was it?" I

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said, and that made her twice as angry. She hated any mention of that time. You see, it was shortly after she came to work for us that she got it. My mother was alive at the time and I remember well the day it all started.

"‘That young Mallows has a dirty head,’ she said. ‘I do believe she has ringworm! That’s the worst of these Mallows. They’re great workers but there’s no knowing what filth they’ll bring into a house. I’ll have to send her down to the dispensary and have her examined.’ And my mother was right. It was ringworm all right. The next thing I knew she was sent off about her business and I heard my sisters saying they shaved her head down at the dispensary. They saw her when they were out for their usual afternoon walk, and they thought they’d never get home quick enough to tell my mother.

"‘We were coming back from the Lake,’ said Kate, ‘and we were laughing and talking as usual, when just as we were getting near the town we thought we heard someone crying under the hedge by the side of the road. Hannah wanted to go on. She said it was nothing, but I went over,’ said Kate, ‘and I looked over the hedge and there stretched out on the grass was young Mallows, with her head shaved to the bone, and she was crying so hard she didn’t even hear me when I burst out laughing. She must have been ashamed to go home through the streets. I suppose she got over the wall at the back of the dispensary and crossed the fields to where we found her. ‘I’m waiting till it’s dark,’ she said, when I climbed though the hedge and asked her what was wrong with her. ‘And get your death of cold? You’ll do nothing of the kind!’ said Kate. ‘You’ll get up this minute and go straight home, daylight or no daylight. A lot of attention you’ll get anyway; a little slut like you!’”

Daniel’s face took on a shamefaced look as he said the last words. It could even have been that they slipped accidentally from his lips.

"‘They were always very hard on her,’ he said, ‘but I think there were a lot of cattle in the field where she was lying and they were all gathered round her, breathing on her and smelling her, and my sisters were afraid she’d come to harm, I suppose. They were always acting for the best, no matter what anyone said. I always recognised that. But anyway they made the girl go home in front of them.’”

"‘It was the funniest thing you ever saw in your life,’ said Kate to mother. ‘She was like a calf being driven along the road. She kept right in the middle of it and we had to keep poking her in the back every other minute to keep her moving, but just as we got to the top of Meadow Lane what

did she do but throw up her skirt over her head like a shawl and make a dash for the cottage as if there was a pack of beagles after her. I thought we'd die, Hannah and I. There we stood at the top of the Lane and watching her making down it, and the best part of it all was the cut of her petticoat behind! It was as black as soot. I nearly died laughing. Hannah had to pull me by the arm.

"What will people think of us?" she said. "People of our position?"

Daniel stopped again.

"My sisters were always thinking about keeping up our position. Our mother was inclined to be more practical.

"I don't see what is so funny about it," she said. "What will we do without her? Goodness knows now long it will take to cure that ringworm!"

"As a matter of fact it didn't take long at all. It was treated in good time. My mother made enquiries at the dispensary, and they said it would be all right to take her back in a week or two, and that she was well disinfected. But it was only then the real fun began. It appeared that the young one wouldn't come back because of her shaved head. She was ashamed of her life to let anyone see it. She wouldn't come back no matter what was said or done. My mother went down to the cottage to her, and still she wouldn't come back. Then my sisters went down, but she wouldn't even come out into the lane to speak to them."

Daniel looked up at his listener suddenly.

"Do you know I think she was more ashamed of me than of anyone!" he said, "although I never took any notice of her at all in those days, but all the same I think it was me she had in her mind, because it was after I met her in the Lane one evening by chance that she came back.

"It was a summer evening about a month after she left our place and I was coming home from a walk on the shores of the Lake, and as dusk was beginning to gather I thought I'd take a short cut up through Meadow Lane, but first of all I glanced up it to make sure the young Mallows weren't playing outside their cottage. The Lane seemed to be empty. Then, just as I was about a third of the way up the length of it, and safely past the Mallows' cottage, all of a sudden I got a start because there in front of me, as if it had sprung up like a hare out of the grass, I saw a head rise over the wall. I hardly got time to catch a glimpse of it when it bobbed down again, but it was one of the Mallows anyway, I was certain of that much. For a minute my heart nearly stopped. I thought the whole lot of them were inside the wall and that they were

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lying in wait for me, because you've no idea how wild they were. They wouldn't stop at anything. They'd throw a bucket of water over you as quick as they'd wink, all the more especially if they saw, as on that occasion, that a person had his best suit of clothes on him; and they of a light colour into the bargain.

"I suppose when I thought they were all there I should have put my pride in my pocket and made a run for it, but something made me stop.

"Is that you, Tod?" I cried, and I ran over to the wall, but knowing at the same time that he'd be gone if he was the only one in it.

"He wasn't gone, though. There he was crouching under the wall and his head pressed so close against the stones that he didn't see me when I leaned over the top and looked down at him.

"And then, all at once, I remembered the way my sisters had found the young one after they had shaved her head at the dispensary and I suppose that, and the fact that this creature under the wall, in spite of its cropped head, seemed to me, even in the bad light, to have some sort of skirt on it instead of a trousers, made me give an exclamation. It wasn't Tod at all. It was his sister; the young one that had her hair shaved. But if it had been shaved to the roots it must have grown quickly because all over her whole head that was a mass of the tightest little golden curls you ever saw in your life. The very minute I recognised who it was I looked down at her again without her seeing me because her little round head was pressed in tight to the stones, the first thing that came into my mind was that she was like a little posy. And before I had time to think of myself I opened my mouth and said it aloud.

"Posy!" I said, just the one word. Posy.

"Well, I never forgot, from that day to this, the start she gave. At the sound of the voice, she threw back her head in fright, and when she saw me she sprang to her feet. For a minute I thought she was going to dash away but this time I think her temper got the better of her shame, and curiosity got the better of that again, because with one foot raised to run away, she turned back suddenly and her eyes were flashing.

"What was that name you called me?" she said, and she looked such a regular tiger-cat at that moment I thought she would drag the word out of my mouth before I got time to repeat it. All the same I couldn't help laughing. You see I suppose she thought it was some bad name I called her, although

there could hardly be any names like that unfamiliar to anyone who lived in Meadow Lane!

"I laughed again. But I didn't laugh long.

"How dare you laugh at me?" she cried. "You may think you're smart, Mr. Daniel Dogget, but let me tell you that I won't be called names by you or anybody else, whether I am a servant or not!"

There had been such spirit in that reply of forty odd years ago that even the dried-up yellow face of the old bachelor took on some animation as he tried to imitate it. Then his muscles relaxed again.

"Do you know what I did?" he said. "I just stepped back a bit for safety, and I looked her in the eyes.

"Do you know what a posy it at all?" I asked.

"She was going to give me another sharp answer, but I think she had begun to suspect it wasn't such a bad name after all and she was a bit ashamed at her fit of temper.

"What is it?" she asked in a sulky way, but compared to the way she had spoken in the temper it was as soft as a dove cooing.

"A posy is a bunch of flowers," I said, but I was beginning to feel a bit foolish myself. I felt twice as foolish when I saw the look she gave me, but after a minute I saw that this was only because she still didn't understand what I meant. I gave a glance around me at the grassy border of the Lane.

"Wait a minute," I cried, and stepping back two or three steps from the wall I gathered up a few cowslips and wild orchids that were growing round about there, and from the crevices of the wall itself I dragged out a few ferns. "Just a minute and I'll soon show you what I meant by a posy," I said, and I broke off the stems and gathered the heads of the flowers together into a tight bunch, frilling them round with a few of the young fronds of the ferns. "There's a posy for you now," I said, and I looked up at her, because while I was picking the flowers she had ventured to stand up again and lean over the wall. She looked more of a posy than ever. I hadn't noticed it before but she had a lovely face, round and soft with soft eyes, although there could be a flash in them when she liked; I learned that afterwards. "I suppose you would have understood me better," I said suddenly, "if I said you were as pretty as a posy?"

"For another minute she leaned forward, then suddenly she laughed and slipped down behind the wall again inside, and a minute afterwards I heard her, still laughing, as she ran across the field on the other side of it."

Daniel paused almost as if he still listened to those light

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footsteps through the moist evening grasses. Then his voice quickened.

"Next morning when I went in to breakfast after taking down the shutters of the shop, there she was, without a word, washing the delph in the kitchen. It gave me a surprise to see her, I can tell you. There had been no mention of her coming back. In fact I don't believe my sisters knew she was in the house at all; they hadn't come downstairs. I got such a surprise I called out.

"'Who's that?' I cried, although of course it was only an exclamation, as you couldn't mistake the girl, with her headful of little tight curls like a boy. But if she knew it was an exclamation she didn't pretend. Instead she looked over her shoulder and smiled with a wicked little smile.

"'It's Posy!' she said.

For the first time the stranger asked a question.

"What did you say?" he asked.

Daniel was jolted out of his reverie.

"Oh, what did I say?" he repeated somewhat self-consciously. "I can't recall it now, but I know the name never left her, at least it never left her as long as she was in this town anyway. She was always saying that it ever she got a chance to make a new start in another place she'd use her christian name."

The judge smiled again.

"And you don't recollect what that was?" he said, but almost before he spoke a change came over the face of the old bachelor. In spite of the perpetual stoop that had grown on him, he shot upright for a moment under the influence of some violent agitation.

"I wonder!" he exclaimed suddenly. "I wonder if ——" But as abruptly as he exclaimed he stopped up again and glanced hurriedly at the other man. The judge smiled still more strangely.

"I was thinking the very same thing," he said quietly. "Was your Posy Mallows one and the same person as my Mary Mallows?"

In his eye as he spoke there was the glint of an eagle. But Daniel's face was flabbier than ever. No sooner had the question entered his mind, than it seemed utterly beyond all question that Posy was Mary. It only seemed incredible to him now that he had ever forgotten her real name. Mary: yes, undoubtedly he recalled something about the name. But suddenly even his pale eye took on a glint, and like so many irrelevancies the thoughts that had rushed into his mind were

all at once subordinated to one question.

What interest had this stranger in the story of Posy Mallows?

The two men stared at each other. Why had the young girl lived so vividly in the old fellow's mind? The judge too had his curiosity.

Had Posy gone into service with this young man's mother? Daniel tried to calculate the differences of their years. It was extraordinary how those Mallows had all got themselves into good families. And Posy was clean enough to get work in the best of houses, in spite of all his sisters used to say about her, although even he himself used to think she'd never make a real servant; there was something too impudent in her nature. But whatever about that now, it was clear he must have been mistaken; and not only that but badly mistaken, because it would want to be an exceptional servant that would have roused a young man's interest like this to enquire about her birthplace. Was she still alive, Daniel wondered, and he would have given a lot to ask.

The two men stared at each other, each with a question behind his eyes.

Which of them would give way first?

"I'll have to ask outright," thought the younger man, but just as he opened his mouth with the intention of doing so, Daniel raised his head and gave a started glance through the window.

Down the street, on the other side, although the light was rapidly fading, he had seen a thin spinster figure in a bright blue costume, sailing straight for the shop, and her eyes, even at a distance were trying to pierce the thick plate glass of the shop window. It was Miss Kate Dogget returning from the court, where, having arrived too late, she had been unsuccessful in trying to catch a glimpse of the new judge. But having no doubt heard by this time that the new judge whom she had gone to such pains to see, had been observed not a quarter of an hour ago, going towards her own shop, she was now speeding home with all haste.

Daniel uttered a small elderly exclamation of vexation. But to the judge Miss Kate was unknown, and so therefore was the cause of Daniel's sudden exclamation.

"What is the matter?" he asked with surprise.

But Daniel hardly trusted himself to speak. He felt that he had been put at a disadvantage. His only chance now of keeping his information to himself was to get the other man out of the shop before Kate got into it.

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"I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me, sir," he said hurriedly and awkwardly. "I see my sister coming down the street and I had some things to attend to in her absence. If you still want to see where Posy lived you can find the place easily without any help." He caught the young man by the arm and gently urged him towards the door. "Just take the first turn on your left after you pass the gable of this house," he said.

If Kate came in while they were talking about the Mallows there would be no knowing what she might say. One mention of Posy and she'd be sure to make some bitter remark that would let everything out. Those lawyers had their ears washed! Daniel glanced with positive dislike at the elegant young man, who, as if further to annoy him, seemed now disinclined to bother about Posy at all.

"Well, I must ask you to excuse me all the same," said Daniel desperately and made a dart behind the counter. "She'll be here in a minute," he said, because Kate had begun to cross the street now.

Was the old fellow daft? The young man couldn't help raising his eyebrows. Daniel looked up. Waves of humiliation swept over him. He bent down again and began to busy himself with sorting some articles on the floor.

"You know what women are!" he said desperately and then he glanced up again. The young man still looked surprised. Kate was so near now they could hear her heels on the pavements. "They have big ears!" said Daniel at last, in an outburst of confidence, that seemed to himself to be so clear in its meaning that his own ears began to flame.

"I beg your pardon?" said one of the most eminent young men in the legal faculty obtusely.

"Well, you see," said Daniel with a gulp and a rush, "I'd just as soon my sister wouldn't know what we were talking about."

But the young man was pitiless. Once again he raised his eyebrows.

"You see," gasped Daniel, "there was talk at the time!" Silence.

"Talk?" said the young man then.

"About Posy," said Daniel quickly. "And me," he added. It was out: the small little dried-up secret.

"And you!" The young man couldn't help exclaiming out

loud. In fact he almost burst out laughing, but seeing the way the old fellow's face had begun to twitch again about the gills he rapidly put another countenance upon his surprise. "A man of your position!" he added quickly.

Daniel's cheeks ceased to tremble but a lachrymose expression came over his face.

"I see you are an understanding man," he said, "more so than most!" And suddenly becoming as agile as a cat he slipped out again from behind the counter. "Would you like to hear more about it?" he asked, at the same time catching the young man by the sleeve.

The young man however was glancing at his watch.

"I'd like to see Posy's cottage," he said, "if it's still standing." He wasn't so interested after all in Daniel's dried-up romance.

"It's not," said Daniel hurriedly, "but you could see where it used to be. I could take you down Meadow Lane and show you the spot. I could show you where I first saw Posy when she bobbed her head over the wall!" He was beside himself with excitement.

"Very well," said the young man, and he looked at the door preparatory to making a move in that direction. But Daniel shot out his arm.

"Not that way!" he almost shouted in his excitement. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said, hastily correcting his tone, "I mean I'd be much obliged if you wouldn't mind stepping this way," and retaining his clutch upon his companion's arm he half-urged and half-dragged him in the opposite direction, towards the doorway that led into the yard, at the far end of which a large gate stood open showing the green and yellow fields beyond the town with a flash of the lake in the far distance. "If you cross the yard and go out that gate you'll find yourself at the top of the Lane," he said, pointing with his anaemic hand. "I'll try and get out as quickly as I can and I'll follow you."

Then, giving the stranger another urge forward he banged the door on the back of his heels, just as Miss Kate Dogget sailed into the shop at the other end.

Outside in the yard the zinc sides of the cement-mixers and the bright red paint of the plough-shares and harrows gave a false air of brightness, but when the young man stepped into the lane beyond the gateway he saw how the day had declined, for between the narrow walls to either side of him, made for

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the most part at this end, out of the derelict remains of old sheds and store-houses, the rutted ground underfoot was indistinct, and the wayside grass so dark that a solitary cow that grazed it remained unseen until it raised its head against the rosied horizon.

At sight of the calm and silent evening that had descended while he was indoors something of the high spirits that had underlain his teasing of the old fellow in the shop, ebbed away, and a feeling he had experienced earlier in the afternoon returned to the young man. He wanted to see this Lane. He wanted to see this cottage.

The Lane was not long. Even in the failing light he could see to the far end of it where a humped bridge went over a small river and brought one a few yards further only to abandon one to the open fields. And as for the cottages, there were not more than a dozen of them, in all of which at that moment a small flicker of light showed that the evening fire, at least, if not the evening lamp, had already been lit. An enquiry at any of these would surely result in a moment in his finding the cottage he sought. What need was there to bother with the garrulous old fool from the shop. For a growing irritation was coming over him now that he was out in the clear evening air. It was all very well to laugh at the spinsterly fidgetty old fool. Mary Mallows would have laughed till the tears ran down her face; but Mary Mallows was Mary Mallows. It wasn't everyone who had her sense of humour. He had had enough of the old fellow, and he hurried forward down the Lane. He would make enquiries at one of the cottages. After a few paces, however, in the middle of the flickering chain of lights from the little windows along the Lane, his eye was caught by a dark gap, where the bright chain was broken and no light shone. His eye went quickly from this dark gap to the end of the Lane. There was no other break in the line of little lighted dwellings.

So this was it? There was no need even to enquire. The young man moved forward slowly, and in a few paces he had come to the place where Posy's cottage had stood, but of which nothing now remained but the gables, and a portion of one outer wall in which a window frame without glass gave a cheerless view of the desolation within. The little cottage had been thatched, but the roof had long fallen down and rotting remnants of it filled the empty cavities that had once been the hearthstones.

The young man leaned against the derelict mud-wall and looked over the sill of the window at the rotting thatch and nettles. Soon, however, even this desolation was hidden from him and there was nothing at all to be seen except a lonely mass of dark shadows. But still he stood there silent in the darkness and then, becoming more and more a prey to the sadness and loneliness of both the place and the thoughts it aroused, the young man closed his eyes. At once his ears became more sensitive and he began to listen, although he did not exactly know what it was he expected to hear. Was it only the timeless sounds that are heard in lonely places, the sound of the cricket or the frog, and the thin piping of the bat? Or did he think to hear in fancy the voice of the young servant girl Posy Malloes? What ever it was that with closed eyes the young man thought to hear, however, it was certainly not the voice of Daniel who rose up beside him suddenly like a shadow on a wall.

"It all worked out as nicely as possible," said Daniel, breaking at once into his burden. "I was hoping Kate wouldn't see you," he said, "but it was all for the best that she did. 'Who was that?' she said, her eye clapped on the yard-door as soon as she stepped inside the other door. There was nothing for it but to tell her. 'And what on earth did he want here?' she said. You see, she went down to the Court all the way especially to see you and she couldn't believe her ears that you just walked into the shop like any ordinary person. 'What did he want?' she said again. So I had to tell her; not about Posy, of course, but about Meadow Lane. 'He had business in Meadow Lane,' I said, 'and he was enquiring the way to it.'

"I thought she'd never believe that. I thought she'd ask what the like of you would be doing in a place like Meadow Lane, but she was too anxious to get a dig at me to notice anything. She never loses a chance of that; a chance of giving me a dig.

"And if that was the case," she said, taking off her hat and going right behind the counter at once, 'do you mean to stand here and tell me you let him make his way down that dirty little lane by himself at this time of the evening and that you didn't ask to step to the door with him, or even to the top of the lane. Indeed I wouldn't have thanked you to have gone the whole way with him. But I suppose'—this was where she gave me the dig—'I suppose you wouldn't be long about offering directions if he was some good-for-nothing out of the gutter.' You see, she never loses an opportunity of throwing it in my

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face about long ago. Indeed she often made insinuating remarks at the time, and in front of Posy too."

Here the younger man stirred slightly in the dark.

"What did Posy say to that?" he asked quietly.

"Oh, she never said anything to Kate," said Kate's brother. "She didn't want to be sent home, I suppose. I didn't know why at the time but I suppose now she was saving the money to go away. It was to me she used to say anything she had to say. She'd say anything to me! 'Are you a man at all?' she said to me one day, 'or how can you listen to talk like that if all you say about me is true?'" Daniel laughed sheepishly. "I used to say an odd thing about her hair or her eyes; girls like that kind of thing you know. But sometimes she wouldn't listen to anything,

"Why don't you face up to them?" she used to say, because Hannah was as bad as Kate in her own way. 'Why don't you tell them to mind their own business?' I used to be in mortal dread they'd hear her because this would all be said back of a door or in the passage-way, or maybe out in the store-room, but the house wasn't so big you could get much privacy anywhere in it.

"What if they do hear me?" she used to say, and she would drag her arm away from me. 'It would give them a proper fright. I suppose they'd nearly go mad. They'd be sure and certain you were caught, and that I'd be walking in here to take the keys out of their hands.' 'Maybe you will be doing that some day,' I said, because she was the kind of girl you'd find yourself saying things to without altogether meaning them, you know. But wasn't I very foolhardy in those days? You see I didn't understand. I remember the way the sweat broke out on me when Kate said the Mallows could have taken every penny we had from us if Posy brought a Breach of Promise action against me and repeated things like that in the Court; not that Posy would ever have taken a mean advantage of me—she wasn't that kind. In fact if things had been otherwise I don't suppose I would ever have done better, but considering our position in the town of course it was out of the question from the start. Even Posy could see that.

"Before you think of buying a ring for any girl you'd better buy a couple of railway tickets,' she said another day, 'because no girl will ever go into a house with those old cats of sisters you have.' I used to laugh when she went on like that. She used to look her best when she was giving out about Kate or Hannah. I think she never forgot the day they drove

her down the street with her head shaved.

" 'What would you think,' said I, 'if I went to the station master this minute and got two tickets to Dublin for the mail train to-night? What would you think of that?'"

"Posy only laughed.

"I'd think it was a miracle, that's what I'd think."

" 'Does that mean you'd come?' I said.

" 'It does not,' she said. 'If ever I leave this town I don't want a millstone round my neck. No thanks. I'll buy my own ticket, but I won't even have to do that if your sisters catch you here behind the door with me; they'll buy me a ticket to anywhere I like to mention as long as they get rid of me.' And that was true, you know. I don't know how they got wise to it but they began to think I was in danger. And the worst of it was they didn't know what to do about it. They were afraid I'd get compromised if they kept her and they were afraid she'd go any length to spite them if they sent her home. No matter how they acted I have to admit they were in an awkward position. They were older than me, you know, and they knew the world better. They knew the dangers.

" 'You're so soft,' they used to say to me, 'that Posy Mallows could twist you around her little finger.'"

In the darkness the younger man stirred again. It was an impatient movement.

"If she wanted to do it!" he said, impulsively. "From what you say it seems to me that she had other designs in her head."

"—Than me you mean?"

"Yes."

"Because of all the talk she had about leaving the town?"

"Exactly!"

Daniel had made his cross-examination with a certain hesitation, but now he regained his confidence.

"That was what I thought too," he said, "but that's where my sisters were wiser than me. 'That's only to lead you on, Daniel,' they said, and I declare they were right because every time she mentioned leaving the town a queer sinking feeling used to come over me and I used to think how quiet and lonely the house would be if she wasn't moving about it, humming, or singing under her breath. There is no doubt about it but my sisters were right. A few more remarks about going away and I'd have begun to lose my head. There is no knowing

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what I mightn't have brought on myself, but as I say my sisters had great insight into things. Women understand things better than men, I suppose. Anyway when all was said and done I had to admit they were right. When it was all over and she was gone I saw the situation better. My head was clearer, because no matter what my sisters said about her, she had a way with her; Posy. You wouldn't want to be long near her, if you know what I mean. And my sisters knew that, and they knew another thing too! They knew enough not to let me know their plans until everything was all settled. That was the only thing I blamed them for afterwards. You see I didn't even know they had said anything to Posy at all. I didn't even know she was going away. She was working up to the very last minute. I suppose that was part of the bargain Kate made with her. And if I didn't have to go down to see the station master about a crate of china that was damaged on delivery, I might not even have seen her to say goodbye. I thought badly of that for a long time. And I thought badly of what Posy must have thought of me, although she wasn't one to hide her mind and she didn't say much in the few minutes I was talking to her.

"You see, I had just come out of the goods-yard, after making my complaints, when I happened to glance at the train drawn up alongside the platform, ready to depart. I only glanced at it carelessly, you know the way one does these things, because, I suppose, the lighted windows of the compartments drew my attention when I was walking along the dark platform, and the platform in this town is darker and more dismal than most places, I think; but that's beside the point. Anyway to make a long story short, as I was glancing carelessly from one compartment to another, suddenly I got a kind of a start at the familiar look of a young girl in one of the carriages, although her back was to the window, and she was reaching up to settle her baggage on the rack. And then I saw that her coat was familiar too; it was just like a blue coat Kate used to wear, although it looked a lot different from what it would look like on Kate, and round the neck of it this girl had tied a bright red scarf, the like of which you'd never see on Kate. She always held red to be a colour of no class. But anyway I was just thinking that the red scarf was like a thing Posy would wear, when all of a sudden it came over me with a clap that the girl was Posy. But how could it be Posy, I thought. And then at that moment the girl turned round, and not only was there no mistake about its being Posy but she looked out and in spite of the dark of the platform the next thing I knew

she had seen me—do you remember people always said the Mallows had cats' eyes; they could see in the dark.

"Hello! Is that you?" she said.

"Posy?" I cried. "What is the meaning of this?" And I tried to open the door of the carriage but the train was on the point of pulling out of the station; in fact I could hardly hear my own voice with the noise of the whistle and the steam hissing, and then, even while I was dragging at the handle of the door the train began to move.

"Mind yourself!" cried Posy.

"Wait a minute!" I shouted, so taken by surprise that I didn't know what I was saying.

"Posy only laughed. 'Sorry,' she said, 'but I'm not the engine driver.'

"She was like that; saucy and impudent to the last. The train began to move. I ran along the platform with it.

"Where are you going?" I shouted. "When are you coming back?"

"But Posy only laughed again.

"Wait and see," she said, but just at the last minute, as I came to the end of the platform and couldn't go any further with the train, she seemed to change her mind about something.

"Goodbye Daniel," she said, and she never presumed on my christian name before, so I knew she had something important to say. I put up my hand to my ear to catch it, although the way the wind was blowing back the sparks from the engine and the clouds of steam and smoke I suppose I would have heard her anyway; if indeed everyone on the platform didn't hear it as well as me. 'Goodbye Daniel,' she said. 'Be grateful to your sister Kate. She did a lot for you.' She leaned out further. 'She did one thing anyway; she saved you the price of a couple of railway tickets.'"

Daniel's voice cracked under the unusual strain of so much talk and excitement.

"It was true for her too," he said then, more quietly, "because if I had known what was in Kate's mind I would have been mad with rage. Young men are very inflammable. It's not till they get old they get sense. As sure as anything I would have thrown discretion to the winds and run away with her."

All at once in the distance a train sounded, shunting at the junction beyond the town.

A sudden compunction smote Daniel.

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"But what am I thinking about?" he cried, "talking away about myself like this and never thinking about you, sir. I suppose you have to catch the mail train?"

"The train Posy took?" said the stranger, and he seemed to have regained his spirits.

"Yes," said Daniel absently. He had recalled with misgivings and alarm that Kate had told him to be sure to bring the judge back for a cup of tea before he left the town. She would have it all ready, he knew. She'd have a fire in the upstairs drawing-room, and she'd have taken out the best china and linen. But there wouldn't be time for that now. How would he face her at all? It would be another occasion for cutting remarks. "My sister will be annoyed with me," he said. "She was expecting you to come back for a cup of tea."

"Oh, not at all," said the young man. "As a matter of fact there's no need for me to detain you any longer either. I can find my way to the station all right from here." They had come to the top of Meadow Lane and were abreast of the gable of Daniel's shop. Just as Daniel thought, there was a lamp lighting in the upstairs parlour. "There's just one thing I'd like to ask," said the stranger, "if you don't mind my asking."

"What is it?" said Daniel.

"Did you never have any regrets?"

Daniel stopped for a moment.

"Well," he said reluctantly. "Nature is nature and a man would want to be made of sawdust not to have an odd feeling in that direction, if you know what I mean?"

The judge nodded.

"But on the whole," said the other, "I knew it was all for the best."

"Still, I understand you never married?"

Daniel made an impatient gesture. "Oh, that had nothing to do with it," he exclaimed. "I had plenty of chances to marry. In fact to this day there are people trying to make matches for me." An asperity came into his voice. "Not that I'd have anything to do with them or their matches." A flash of real irascibility came into the old bachelor's voice. "You wouldn't want to be very long in this town to see that there isn't another town in Ireland to beat it for plain-looking women. They are one worse than another. There isn't one in the town with a presentable figure. And for the most part they're downright ugly."

The stranger listened with raised eyebrows.

"All the same," he said, "I should imagine there would be things you'd regret. For instance you might have your family growing up beside you now."

"If I married Posy you mean?" said Daniel.

"Well, that wasn't exactly what I meant," murmured the young man.

"But, don't you see that was the whole trouble," said Daniel. "That was what my sisters brought home to me."

"It's all very well for you," they said. "You can lower yourself if you like, but how would you like to have people throwing it in the face of your children that their mother was a chit of a servant-girl from the back lanes of the town?" That was what they were looking into all the time, that and the disgrace to themselves of course, but mainly that. And I came to understand it, of course after a while. I'm surprised that you don't understand it, sir; a man of your position."

The judge, however, seemed to have grown stiffer in the last few minutes. He said nothing.

Daniel felt a chill descend on him. Was it for this he had broken the silence of forty odd years; to be misunderstood? He couldn't let the young man go without making him understand.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Put it another way. Put it like this. You are a young man of position; a young man of means; and a young man with prospects. Your achievements no doubt were mainly due to your own ability, I suppose, but nevertheless I think you will agree with me that you owe some of your success to your social position; that is to say the social position of your parents. Isn't that right?"

The young man murmured some sort of assent to this.

"In fact," continued Daniel, "I suppose you would be prepared to admit that while your own ability might have carried you every bit as far as you have gone, you owe it to your parents that you arrived so speedily at your present position. Would you be prepared to admit that?"

"Admit that?" The young man seemed indignant. "That would be a grudging acknowledgment of what my parents have done for me!" he said. "As a matter of fact I can safely say that it is to them I owe everything I am. My father gave me money and position, but that would not have been much use without something else, but from my mother I inherited my ambition and determination and indeed any other of the qualities that were necessary for my success in the profession."

Daniel could hardly wait for him to finish his sentence.

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"There you are!" he cried. "See! That just proves my point. Where would you be, young man, if your father had married any other woman but your mother? Where would you be if he had lost his head to some uneducated slip of a girl from a back street? You never even considered that, did you? No! and neither would I have considered it if it wasn't for my sister Kate's vigilance and guidance!"

They moved a few steps forward. The light from the upstairs parlour fell across the street in a long oblong. The young judge moved into the light.

"Well, it's a good thing you feel grateful to her," he said, and then as Kate's shadow at that moment fell across the glass, he suddenly put up his hand and doffed his hat to the shadow. "As a matter of fact," he said to Daniel, holding his hat in his hand for a moment while the light fell on his thick curly head, "as a matter of fact, I have cause to be grateful to her myself." And with this inexplicable remark he glanced sharply at his watch and put out his hand. "I must not miss this train," he said. "You'd never know what luck I might have on it. You see, it was on this train forty odd years ago that my father first met the girl who became my mother."



OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY



Psychoanalysis

Said my psychiatrist,
"Nobody's normal.
You are a Narcissist
With a brain storm all
Swirling with many a twist
Through half your brain;
An exhibitionist
And schizophrene.

You were too early weaned
And bottle fed.
You felt yourself demeaned
When put to bed:
Hence, it's late hours for you;
And your cheeks' mottle
Proves your addiction to
Pulls at the bottle.

You stamped your baby foot,
In days of yore,
Where your Papa had put
Tacks on the floor.
Still that's affecting you.
Naught will avail
Until your lifted shoe
Rests on a rail.

As for the dreams you dreamt
Of diving bells;
Mermaids with hair unkempt,
Codfish and eels:
These I will not explore,
Lest there be fallacies,
Till we have done some more
Psychoanalyses."

SEAMUS BYRNE



Oh! Most Wise Judge!

IT was grand sitting on Rothwell's wall with most of your next day's school-work done, just you and Mikey and Humpy, and, maybe, Puddiner Hickey, and nothing to worry you except the row you'd get into when you went home for you should have been home at half-past eight. Time enough to worry about that! It couldn't be much after nine o'clock yet.

"I could stay out all night if I liked," Humpy would say; but he had to admit that he never did when Mikey asked him the blunt question.

But, "time enough" flies fast, as they say, and getting on for ten o'clock you'd begin to wonder about maybe never going home at all on account of the row you would get into. But that would be no good because even if you ran away and worked on a farm and the farmer's wife fed you well because she had neither chick nor child of her own, you'd get into twice as big a row when you went home. Because you always went home in the finish. Always! But wait, supposing!—supposing this; she made you eat cabbage and bacon fat, and the farmer made you walk up and down the mucky field all day with the horse pulling the thing, and so, you joined the sailors instead. The sailors!—and you came home with a parrot. No good! Home again! And another row, parrot or no parrot. Unless—and this was the only way—you came home with a moustache. Puddiner Hickey's sneer and jeer when he saw you with it on. A moustache! A row would be nearly better than that.

A perfect patrolled the study-hall, and Ted, sensing his silent approach, glanced down at his Latin book.

"Oh! Most Wise Judge!" he mumbled, the sentence in the text.

"Judex sapientior—issimus—issime!" A stealthy shadow, the passage of time on a sundial and the prefect had glided by.

"The sailor loves the farmer's daughter," the next sentence ran.

"Nauta—" Ted wrote. Sailor and Farmer again! Fancy the two of them turning up here, miles from home and Rothwell's wall. Nauta sailing the seven seas and swabbing decks with a moustache. Afraid to go home without it. Shore leave now! And no row! She'd cry she'd be so glad to see him. Where had he been for all these years? She wouldn't ask that, because that would be too like saying:

"Ted, where were you till this hour of night?"

He'd put the cage down on the table; she wouldn't even mention about it being the good clean table-cloth; and he'd say:

"Mother, I am a Nauta! I brought you home a faithful parrot for me to play with. Where's father?" And, through her tears she'd say:

"It's all right, son, your father's out. And, anyway I didn't tell him about you not coming home."

Then he'd show her his great knotted muscles, and she'd notice the snake on his arm. A witch-doctor put it on, who could vanish a boy up a rope or could even vanish a snake. But not this snake; because this one was tattooed on.

"My baby, my baby!" And she'd cry again.

"I'm sorry, Mother, about the snake. Or it is the muscles?" It could be either; for mothers are queer.

"No, darling, I don't mind the snake or the muscles—and thanks very much for the parrot—" Weeping again! And you wouldn't know what she was crying about. A good job he hadn't brought home—Gosh!—supposing he'd brought her home! The farmer's daughter! 'Puella' was her Latin name. Smashing good name for her too! A long skinny thing with stringy hair and the heel out of her stocking. 'Little girls made of sugar and spice and all that's nice'—puellas deep in their hearts! But supposing he had brought her home. Now look at the mess he'd be in. Into a row again!

"A snake or a parrot is one thing—but to bring home a wife!" Gosh! he was lucky to leave her there, and very wise, herself and the horse harnessed together knee-deep in slush in the mucky field till death did them part. Oh! Most Wise Judge!

"Balbus built a wall," the Latin text informed him. Rothwell's wall! Balbus! So that's who built it. A poor, broken-down job too! Humpy and Mikey were there now. Probably Puddiner Hickey too! If only he were at home—

"Mother, can I go up to the Wall?" She wouldn't even pretend to hear.

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"Mother!" The Vocative case for invoking people. You invoked God and His Holy Mother.

"Mother! Can I?" Keep on invoking until she did.

"Can you what? You'd provoke a saint!" Provocative case.

"Go up to the Wall." Then she'd start to chew the rag; bad companions, carrying stones and breaking telegraph-cups: Mikey and Humpy smoking, and 'leading you into things.' You'd love to tell her that you led. Just as often as they did! But the best was to sing dumb. Let her talk and don't catch her eye, in case she'd ask the question:

"Does Mikey smoke? Did you never see him?" That could make things very awkward. Once she said:

"Didn't Mikey shoot young Carroll in the leg with an air-gun?" That was too much for flesh and blood!

"He had to shoot him. Young Carroll dared him. He had to take a dare, hadn't he? But Mikey didn't shoot to kill; he shot him in the leg. Not through the heart or temple."

"Oh, a nice lad! A nice companion!" says she, sarcastic. Draw in your horns, in case she'd say you were back-answering.

"Hasn't the same Mikey got heart-disease?" If she said that, as sure as eggs, she'd always add:

"From smoking?" You'd feel guilty about his heart; although he only had it, that was all: he didn't do anything with it. But, somehow, it made him a 'bad companion.'

"He only has it, Mother. He doesn't try to give it to me—or breathe on me—or anything. And the Doctor says—"

"Do you sit beside him on Rothwell's wall?"

"No, Mother; not since you told me not to."

"Does he sit beside you?"

"No, mother—not now." And Mikey didn't. Honestly! I told him I couldn't sit beside him on account of him having what-you-know, and to do his best to remember to sit beside somebody else. And it shows you the decent sort he was—bad companion and all!—

"I'll try and remember," Mikey said: and he never once forgot.

"That little hunchback lad," Mother would say, "what's his name?"

"Humpy." You had told her a hundred times.

"What school does he go to?" Knowing full well he went to none.

"He's in his father's shop." You'd love to tell her at one go, he was thirteen, he wasn't a Protestant, and his other name

was Billy; but she wouldn't take answers until she put the questions.

"What happened to his back?" And you in a sweat to get out!

"Nothing! Except there's a hump on it."

"How did he get that?" She'd have you weary! Even Humpy himself didn't know. Then her voice meandering, sadly:

"He must have had it when he was born." A good job for me it was when he was born!—she couldn't say he got it from smoking.

"God help his poor Mother! A terrible affliction." Humpy's Mother—the woman hadn't a hair astray! And, 'disability' he called it himself; and he ought to know. You could call it what you liked; but if you were jeering—look out! A vicious temper, Humpy had, and a good shot with a brick; which was just as well for himself, on account of his disability.

The time that Puddiner Hickey said:

"Humpy, turn around: and let me put me hand on yer hump." Humpy stiffened and started to shiver like a terrier waiting for you to throw a stone, and his large eyes narrowed squeezing out little needles of cold anger. But Puddiner Hickey wasn't jeering; he was in a kind of outlandish humour.

"Go on, Humpy! Just for luck!" You'd give anything for it not to happen; and Mikey, trying to stop it, said:

"A person's disability is the luckiest thing to touch."

"Like kissing a corpse," he added; but Humpy didn't move. Right enough, the previous week, young-Carroll-that-Mikey-shot-in-the-leg's mother died, and before she was coffined we all kissed her, just for luck. And Humpy kissed her too!

"Would you like to feel me heart disease?" says Mikey, and he opened his shirt. But Puddiner Hickey was no good and he couldn't take a hint.

"Go on, Humpy! Turn around."

Humpy quivered a little bit; then he turned his back, meek as a lamb, face to the wall, with his head bent. Puddiner Hickey turned towards the moon, and putting his hand on Humpy's back, he solemnly closed his eyes. He stood like that a few seconds, mumbling a jumble of magic words.

"Moon! Moor!" in a lamb's bleat. Then, Merciful Mother!—his cracked scream tore a jagged rent through the clear sky:

"Imiji castessi filando velbronac! Crown with good luck: Frown on bad luck: Gold and Silver be my lot!" Then Puddiner

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Hickey opened his eyes and turned to me with a terrible shout:

"Come on! Put yer hand on it now! Quick! While the wish is hot!" keeping his hand on it all the time; but I shook my head.

"While it's hot!" he shouted as loud as he could, "and you'll get yer wish if ye do!" But I daren't move: Humpy might see that I was afraid and see Mikey beckoning Puddiner Hickey to take his hand away.

"Touch it for God's sake!" Humpy screamed. Such a sound he made! Mikey and me jumped off the Wall and touched his back, a thing I wouldn't do ever again for a million pounds.

Humpy was leaning against the wall, and his thin little shoulders were shaking with sobs. What could you say or do? Then he turned and skedaddled down the street, a frightened spider under the light of the gas lamps. And we called and whistled and called and called; but he must have gone home; though we never asked him when we saw him again the next night.

"Can I go now, Mother? Up to the Wall?" You might be digging your own grave, to ask again. Think of something: a bit of 'news': a fellow told me that a fellow told him. News! Nothing on earth she liked as well. So, your best dart was: the man that was lagged on Saturday night in a pub in the Hollow for starting a fight. Battered good-looking! Ye should have seen him! And the man that was struck was near bleeding to death where his throat was cut with a pint glass that the gouger said, the one that was lagged, slipped out of his hand by chance. Chance, how are you!

She might crab about Mikey or Humpy; but, funny enough, she'd never say:

"About that Puddiner Hickey lad?" It must be because he was so polite when he called and asked her to let me out to come to his Magic Lantern Show. Not frightened-polite, like Mikey was, but polite, as if he was used to it, which he was too, on account of his mother was an English lady and used to dance on the stage one time before he was born, in the Pantomime. And he told Mother all the slides he had, and he frowned and hoped it wouldn't break down like it did before when the lights went out. Such a liar! And such a smile! The real sign of a bad companion. But she let me out. And afterwards, up at the Wall, Puddiner Hickey said:

"Supposin' now, it did break down—the Magic Lantern, I mean." Ashamed of my life of letting him tell her such a lie,

I just short-answered him:

"How can it break down when there isn't one? Ye have no Magic Lantern."

"I know," says he, "but supposin' it did! Would she let ye come to the Show again, as soon as me uncle fixed it?"

All that Puddiner had was gab! The Magic Lantern was like the bike he was getting when his father came home and that very morning his mother had a letter with a foreign stamp, and the boat would be docking any day now in Ballinasloe, unless the monsoon held him up in the Gulf Stream, or they struck an iceberg, like the Titanic, and he'd be delayed on account of being Captain and would be the last to leave the ship.

"Puddiner Hickey's father is a myth," Humpy said, and he wouldn't explain, except to say:

"It's all my eye and Betty Martin," whatever he meant by that.

Puddiner Hickey sang something lovely; and he did too, by himself, sometimes, in the Chapel Choir, till Mr. Murray put him out and he wasn't let go on Excursion Day with lemonade and sambiges; on account of the candles that were lost from the Chapel by some person or persons unknown from the box in front of Saint Anthony who was grand at finding anything you lost, so long as you promised to light him one, and some people never paid him at all, but kept putting it off from day to day and in the end they lost it again. Signs on! the candles were found in a huckster shop in Cork Street, and the woman didn't know the boy but he answered to a description. And Mr. Murray explained so much and frightened them all, so that the Hymn Books fell on the floor and he wouldn't let anyone pick them up until he was finished banging the table: and all about sacrilege and all, and it was a great mystery to him how any boy from a good home could bring himself to do it. But the hornies said it was no mystery, but Puddiner Hickey.

It was different now with poor Puddiner gone, and Mikey and me both hoped he'd get out. But Humpy 'Puddiner Hickeyed' him still and said it was a mortal sin to pray for the man who stole the candles from God's house. And then he said:

"I hope the bastard gets five years hard."

You'd think of Puddiner chained to the wall in a convict's suit, and the savage scream of the cat-o'-nine-tails through the air, as the lash fell for twenty strokes on the poor lad's back for not washing his ears back and front when he couldn't even break the ice on the washing basin. A planned escape!—a code

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to signal when and where—meet him with a racing bike—we'd borrow one—sell my rabbit for two shillings—feed poor Puddiner—bread and tea—sometimes Fruit Cake—Nuttie Favourites—according as we could afford—Puddiner'd live there—safe and sound—where d'ye think?—hornies searching with batons and guns—where you'd never, never guess: in Mikey's hen-house!

So, you couldn't help being a bit fed up when Mikey came with the good news:

"Me father says, and he ought to know, that Puddiner can't be convicted, unless that he's identified." And Mikey's father is a horny too, a constable in them, and knows the law. And the woman can't identify him. The pity is: the hen-house is empty and never used.

"Me father says, in the eyes of the law, Puddiner Hickey is innocent—and to keep away from him, he's bad company."

And Puddiner got out as a first offence, without much of a stain on his character, on account of his mother spoke up and said she couldn't find his father. But she heard, for a fact, he was in Ballinasloe.

"Now," said Humpy, "who's right? Puddiner Hickey's a bastard." And according to Mikey, his father said that the Judge said:

"The police would be far, far better employed in tracing the child's father." Oh! Most Wise Judge!

Puddiner Hickey came back to the Wall. Same old gab! Getting everything! This and that! An air-gun too! A fountain pen! And a three-speed-gear on the bike he was getting when his father came, which, as usual, was any day now. The Liar! As if we didn't all know. No blame to Humpy, when he said,

"Do you take us all for an eedjit?"

No use telling Mother that—she wouldn't understand.

"Can I, Mother? Up to the Wall?" You might have asked her a dozen times.

"But what do you do? What do you do, up at the Wall." As if you had to be doing something!

"Nothing!" And that was the truth. It wasn't the things you did, but the things you couldn't do. Things you could do if you got three wishes, or your father was a millionaire, or God let you work a miracle. Puddiner Hickey humming a tune, Mikey whistling seconds. And you looking out into Rothwell's field giving yourself frights supposing a man jumped out from behind the cart with a big knife and you got caught in the

barbed wire before you could get to the heap of stones and kill him in self-defence and your little body was laid in the grave and your mother was broken-hearted, because she'd have no one to go on the messages ever again.

Out in the middle of the field, in the darkest part, was a Secret Thing with Seven Wonders and they were yours by Royal Decree, which meant for keeps and not for a lend, if you had the courage and went out there; but you'd be by yourself and what would you do if you met the Devil. Then suddenly the fruit of Three Wishes would grow and swell till it came right up to your very eyes, so close that you couldn't see it at all unless you stood back: But don't stand back! If you do—it will melt into darkness again! So you peered through the blackness of Rothwell's field, and you nearly saw an impossible thing: but you musn't blink, or you'd break the spell! The blinding tears rushed into your eyes. You blinked! And the Thing—whatever it was—was gone!

Less than three weeks ago that was! Now it seems years and years. Mikey: Humpy: they're all gone. Life brought down in ruin: shattered to give place to the advantages of a good school! Advantages!—of a Boarding School! Unhealthy to Walk with your Hands in your Pockets! Undignified to Run in the Hall! Everything you might want to do was Unsomething or Other—in case it was fun. No jersey to carry stones, just a collar and tie. Thinking was moping, games all day, and dreaming was very bad for a boy. You ought to be playing a good, hard game; so you wandered down to the playing field and gave three cheers for the winning team.

And all the different reasons they gave for sending you here!

"You don't want to fritter away the best years of your life?"

"Now that you're thirteen—on the threshold of Life!"

"Your Mother and I will deprive ourselves—to see that you get a good start in Life." But you didn't want her depriving herself; you'd get a job like Mikey had, or Humpy might get you into a shop. Something.

"A good, sound education fits a man to face Life!"

Life, life, life: every reason finished in Life. No, there was one—another one—one that finished in death—the one that he gave when he got annoyed because you said that you'd rather stay at home:

"Do you want to bring Mother's grey hairs down in sorrow to the grave?" He couldn't have meant it: he couldn't! Or, could he? Maybe—maybe he did. He did! And the way he said it would break your heart. You knew at once it was true!

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You must have been doing a terrible thing to your own Mother, unknown to yourself, and she didn't pretend but let you go on day after day doing the thing, whatever it was, that brought her grey hairs down in sorrow to where he said. And it wasn't "unknown to yourself" at all, but all the things you were always doing, always and always, and thinking of no one but yourself.

Oh, Mother, why didn't you stop me? Why did you let me do what I like? Even tell me, or give me a hint? I'd do anything now to make you well, and never go up to the Wall again, or bad companions or anything and always stay in and never go out except to go for the messages and come back quick and make no delay—

The funny thing you used to say, sending me to the shop:

"If you fall, don't wait to pick yourself up; and don't be there till you're back."

Is it doing you good for me to be here? I hope it is, and I'll never go home if it keeps you—keeps you from where father said.

Study is over: half-past nine! We're off to bed! Gosh! Balbus's wall. It will have to wait. And Mother. I'll tell her the rest when I go to bed, and the lights are out and I'm under the clothes. I'll tell her and tell her and tell her again, until she knows that I didn't mean, and I never would, to do a thing that would make her sick or her hair get grey; and she's not to fret about me being here because I don't mind and little sorrows put together will drag her down.

When you're thirteen and facing life you have to put certain things behind, things like—unimportant things—like wanting your Mother, just to explain, so she'll understand what you didn't mean; because the fellows here would misunderstand and accuse you of being homesick. So when I'm talking to you to-night, if it makes me cry because it's sad to think of the trouble I gave you, it's between ourselves: and I'll have my head down under the clothes: so, as far as anyone else is concerned it was just a cough.

Oh! Most Wise Judge!



MICHAEL J. MURPHY

The Rising of Yalla Ned

"YOU couldn't have heard of Yalla Ned—you couldn't, sir?"
"I have."

"And you not a month in the parish?"

"I have then."

"And how much did you hear of Yalla Ned?" the old man asked, in a croak.

Mentally, I swore; at the men who told me I'd get folktales from him; at the grim irony that passes for humour in these bardocks of fields slung across the backs of the South Armagh hills.

"How much . . .?" he persisted, taking a swig of tea.

"Dressed like a policeman, and getting a tip when he'd threaten to summons the carts that hadn't names."

"Done it with he's own father"—and the wrinkles crowded to his brow and stayed there—"in the dark of the morning."

"He did!"

"He did—and more!" The fixed look in his eyes hardened.
"You'd be to hear more, sir?"

This twang of expectancy in his voice was thoroughly unsettling. "You mean chasing courting couples from the hedges?—dressed like a priest?"

"More—more!"

"More . . .? Good Heavens!—he didn't actually hear an old woman's Confession, did he?"

He stopped eating instantly, threw out the hand holding the crust of bread, and laughed; a dry, high-flung laugh. "Yalla Ned, the long lingle of disgrace, with the face on him as yalla as an ould churn; an' the two hollows trickling from eye to chin with pure consumption—and the nose of him—like Barney's Rock . . .!"

His own nose was no hillock either, but the way the skirl of laughter fled from his paraphrasing made me sit up. For paraphrasing it was. I'd heard it already, more verbal than vicious, little more than exercise for emotions compressed by these Border hills.

"And you heard no more?"

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" . . . no more."

"There's more then." He turned to put his mug on the table, pushing it between a dish-cloth and half a loaf. "For Yalla Ned quit all them capers when the smuggling started and made a bit on the quiet like everyone else. But 'twasn't to be . . . though it might have been if Moll Hanlon hada stayed away."

"Ned, you see, was mortally afearred of women—any woman. He lived with the brother, you know; and the brother was bent on marrying Moll. The brother now . . . he'd be ten years and some months older than Ned. Ned would be about Moll's age, striking up on forty-five the pair of them. Ah, God a God, sir, Moll mighta been the making of a man. The body of her . . . thon legs under her . . . the face of her, as healthy as a Swede turnip, and as wide. And the grand way she had when she come home here from England—though when she left 'twas in borrowed boots and her as raw as ropes."

His voice drifted off now; but resumed with passion, low and hoarse.

"Well, sir! Ned begged and argued and threatened, God save us, the divil and all. Moll tried to talk round Ned, too; but she might as well talk to the anointed friar. Till in the latter end she lost her temper. 'Ned or Ned,' says she, 'me name's up with yous now and married I'll be.'

"It started of a Sunday, sir,"—his voice dropped a tone or two—"of a Sunday at second Mass, and us all waiting for Father McLeigh to pray for the parish. I think I can hear him yet: 'Your charitable prayers are asked for Edward Mathews of Boolethra, who is dangerously ill.'

"The 'Edward' bamboozled us for a while, till the brother, small blame to him, riz in he's seat as if a fork was stuck in him—and Ned sound and well when he left. Outside the chapel the friends got round him, but the brother only gawked like a man without a mind. So home they flew, home in a body, the brother in front."

Now the old man took a breath as if he were going to sing.

"'Ah, Ned avick, and what happened?—to hear you prayed for?'"

"'And why wouldn't I be'? says Ned from the blankets, for it's in bed he was and the melodeon with him. 'Why wouldn't I be prayed for like another, when they're on their way to make a long ceilidhe with Saint Peter, or the boyo below'?"

"'And who,' says one, a cousin named Malone. 'sent the word to the priest?'"

"'Who,' say Ned, 'bar Saint Patrick himself or a straggler maybe of the Down Militia'?"

"'Mother of God he's away in the head! Run,' Malone says. 'Run for the poliss!'"

"'The poliss, is it?' yaps an undersized friend, a man called the Jawry Magee. 'Is it send for the poliss and have him removed, and me with a girl for the altar and another fit for marrying?' Yapping he was to Malone's moustache like a rat talking back to a dog. 'It's the length of a flail,' says the Jawry again, 'should be bent round he's ribs, the disgrace he's brought on kith and kin—the length of a flail!'"

"And with that Malone reached for Ned. Well, sir!"

The old man was a little longer in resuming, one lip smacking against the other.

"The bawling, sir, that Ned let out of him then was a holy divine dread—bawling they were kicking him, murdering him, whaling hell outa him. And Malone bawling back, when he seen the neighbours running, that he wasn't going to meddle him. Till the clatter of ould women come in and battered every man from the place bar Ned himself. He was moaning then, he's tongue on his chin. Well, sir . . .!"

"That month went by and Ned was the same—on the broad of he's back with nothing, God bless us, bar the melodeon for company and the brother attending to him. He bawled every time that Moll came down, till she kept away for fear of the neighbours. Not a night passed without a crowd at the gate, listening to Ned, or to the ould melodeon—listening in sowl to the distracted brother on he's bended knees begging Ned to rise.

"Then Magee come again. 'For one week, Ned? One week,' says he, 'till me daughter's man sees you. Rise till she's married, and go back then you looney and lie till you rot!'"

"But all Ned done was to bawl.

"So another month passed; and this day Moll come over to the brother. 'Mick,' says she, 'you're a done man. You'll go yourself afore he ever rises. But rise he must, and rise he will, if you have to sell the roof over he's head. Let you call an auction, Mick,' says she, 'and we'll marry and live in me own wee place.'"

"Well, the brother done as Moll bid him, and the day of the sale not a cheep was outa Ned. But no sooner was it opened than he appeared—appeared, by your leave, the way God made him—barring a rag of blanket hardly covering the knees.

"'It's me father's place they're out to sell. Me father's place being sold agin me will. As a son of the house,' says Ned, 'I bid five bob.' And back he goes without waiting on an

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answer—in sowl he needed none; for you go home, and I go home, they way you don't want to be seen. And there was Coyle, the auctioneer, and not a soul with him but a lawyer with he's deeds—and Ned's brother.

"After that the friends come again and coaxed him to rise. And the doctor came. But not a foot would the priest set near him . . . and about that time Pat the Blather died.

"You've heard, sir, I'm sure, of their jibing at a wake? Well, hard and long the whole night through, they jibed at Moll: that Yalla Ned done what no man done. They've a sin to answer for that riz Moll's temper; for I'm told she riz and her flaming mad, saying she'd make him rise if she was cursed itself by bell, book and candle. And out she goes, out through the door, and the day just breaking on the walls.

"Over Moll goes to Yalla Ned's. Well indeed the brother knew 'twas a sinful hour for a single woman to come among two men; but he be to let her in, and when she got in, she shook her fist in he's face. 'Let him bawl till he bursts for I'll stand it no longer'—Moll was really mad, sir—'A fool I've been in the eyes of the world, but a fool I'll be no longer!'

"'It's the law, Moll,' the brother says, 'the law you mean to have on me.'

"'It's a man I want and none of your law; and a man I'll have!' And before he could stop her she was in the room. 'I'll ask you three times, Yalla Ned,' says she. 'Are you going to rise?' But Ned bawled away. And she asked him again—and a third time she asked him; and bawling away, Ned lifts the melodeon.

He paused again, and the voice sank under a rising weight of awe.

"They'll tell you to this day they thought she scalded him. The bawling quit, the melodeon quit. The next thing they knew Ned was out in he's shirt, out through the door with a bit of a blanket; and Moll after that in a lace-flounced shift . . . into the bed she was going to go . . .

"I mind it was May and a dew on the grass, for it riz in steam behind Ned's feet. Mad! . . . mad they were . . . mad in the head! What a sight it was with the long legs of Ned tripping over the blanket, and the spangs of Moll as she run in her shift, the way every lep was over a drain. Round they went and the brother after them—round till they came to the gap, but Moll was so close that Ned missed he's chance; and round they went again.

"'Go home to hell, Moll Hanlon,' says Ned, 'and marry tomorrow,' and him running on. And Moll said back a thing

I won't rehearse; but it made Ned squeal. So coming around again he managed the gap and bolted into the house, and Moll after him. Divil the foot would he go to bed.

"The country's talk it was the next day, and the priest was told as the clergy are. 'Twas Moll he blamed most; and I mind it well he spoke with power the following Sunday on the loose-living English and the immoral notions that infect the world.

"Well, maybe 'twas that, or the race in he's shirt; but a day or two after, Ned took bad. This time the neighbours had to hold him in bed. There was women I know prayed their curse on both of them, and Moll was afraid she'd have his death upon her. Ned was too bad to go to hospital, so Moll said she'd nurse him when the doctor asked; and whatever questions it was he put to her, he said she'd do. She be to learn that abroad in England; and two better hands God never put on no Christian, sir—ah, the woman that was lost in Moll Hanlon. But sure God's being good to the people more often than they know it."

The old man was so long in resuming I thought he had finished. "And didn't Ned object?" I said, very quietly.

"Ned was raving—pure raving mad—cart wheels spinning on ceiling and wall, and devils in their shifts leppin' over the bed. For a month he lay as bad as that, till this Sunday night when the friends were there, Moll come from the room and said Ned wanted them.

"And there he lay as pale as death, and he's heart beating as quick as a dog's.

"'I'm dying,' says he, and they could hardly hear him. 'I'm paying now for the sins of me youth. I'm dying now; for them that's dead do visit me often. And when I'm gone, not a word will be after me—no one to pass remarks of me, or maybe say a prayer itself but me poor brother.' And the words breaking in his mouth, sir.

"'We will, Ned,' says the friends. 'We'll pray often.'

"'It's more than prayers I need to settle. For,' says he, 'I'm going now. But I'll die contented and at peace with you all if there's a headstone over me where I'll lie.'

"So they promised there and then; but he started to cry. 'Promising they are . . . promising now . . . the price when I'm gone . . . putting it off from time to time . . . till it's little better nor a pauper I'll be. I'll die, God pardon yous, with a curse on me lips.'

"The man that was to marry Magee's girl was there, and maybe for a brag, he put five pound notes in Ned's fingers, and

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trouble he had. And as far as twenty pounds went into Ned's fist, but he passed no more remarks of it nor if they were jam papers.

"And that's the last the parish seen of Yalla Ned."

I waited for a while before I said: "He didn't die, did he?"

"Divil the die, sir. For coming on morning Moll slipped out, and it was a long while till they noticed she didn't come back; so down to the room one of them runs. And there was the window open, no sign of Ned, nor the price of the headstone either. The last we heard of them was on a market square in some English town, selling second-hands and doing well. Moll, you see, knew her way around, and Ned had the gift of the gab.

"So God's way's the best way. Who'd think it of her, but for the roguery of Yalla Ned, and saved he's brother from that female's clutches. For the morning after that race round the field, Moll was told straight she could take the law, for divil the ring would the brother put on her. But fair enough, she told him to keep he's law and he's breach of promise. A man she wanted; and a man she got.

"And that's me story. And it's gospel truth, sir."

Again the wrinkles were on his brow, the fixed stare back in his eyes; and again I swore at that irony and satire of these Border hills.

I considered a moment before I said: "So you never married?"

I regretted the impulse when I saw his eyes.

"Who'd marry me, sir, after a disgrace like that? Who I ask now? . . . who?"

VALENTIN IREMONGER



The Dog

All day the unnatural barking of dogs
Sounded in my ears. In O'Connell Street among the crowd,
A dog barked at my heels but, when I looked, was gone.
Sitting at my window, later, at nearly three o'clock,
Glad for the quiet harmony of the afternoon,
A voice reached up like a long arm out of the street
To rap on the shutters of my ears, but when I looked,
The street's chaste line was unbroken, its perspective unchanged.

Now, lying awake in bed, smoking,
Looking out the window, I can see him,
Lean-faced and shaggy, as the moonlight falls
Sideways into my room as into a chapel,
Where he squats on the lawn, tilting his lonely snout,
Raising his lost, unnatural cry.

God send his master is not dead or none he loves,
Being out of countenance, has sent him for succour
And that I don't understand his plaintiveness:
But yet, God help me, I fear this unnatural barking
Has something to do with me and not with strangers,
As quietly I lie, hearing the hours tick by,
And the unsatisfied dog howling upon the lawn,
Breaking the night's maidenhead.

SEAN O'CASEY



Tender Tears For Poor O'Casey

IT touches the heart to think of the deep and lasting affection in which the critics of Dublin hold O'Casey tight, and the big, round tears they shed so sadly over his present irresponsible playwrighting. He is lost! they cry, and will be utterly so, if he doesn't amend his ways, and turn back to first principles. He refuses; he won't: weep on, weep on, his hour is past! Tinkling their one-stringed harps, they sit them down by the waters of Anna Livia Plurabelle, and weep for the lone, lost bard. They want him to go back to the writing of another *Juno And The Paycock*; to the period of the first three "great" or "fine" or "grand"—they always give an uplifting adjective to the noun when they mention them—plays; and, because, so far, he has declined, they are about to build a wailing wall in Dublin to commemorate the poor playwright who took the wrong turning. Am I exaggerating now, or what? I don't think so. Listen: and let us take these critics in the order of their disappearance.

In an issue of *The Irish Times* in 1940, a critic, whose name doesn't appear on his comments, moans dolefully (though I imagine I feel a thrill-thread of joy through the moaning) in a review of *The Star Turns Red*, saying: 'This play drives us to the thought that in *The Plough And The Stars* O'Casey's star saw the last moment of its proper brightness. These early plays were loved for the fresh fun they made in the theatre (evidently a fellow fond of a loud guffaw at anything), and for their vivid version of already 'familiar characters.' We liked these plays because they said things about our serio-comic warfare, which, all the time we had been enduring them, we wanted so fiercely to say ourselves, but just couldn't, because we were afraid. (See? This critic liked these plays, not because they were fine plays, but because they said things he was afraid to say—and that, in his opinion, goes for drama criticism). Then

Mr. O'Casey, blown sky-high above his audiences, began to write "great" plays. The first was *The Silver Tassie*, which the Abbey Theatre at first refused—in Mr. O'Casey's artistic interest only. The latter history of that play is linked closely with the decline of his star." That's Duine gan ainm for you.

A critic signing himself "K," quotes a critic named A. E. Malone as writing in 1929 in *The Irish Drama* "For the moment the future of O'Casey is artistically a problem upon which no decided opinion can be given (and he giving a decided opinion all the time!) It may be suggested that his basis (his basis!) is definitely localised and except his talent be greater than it at present appears to be, his future will be as much a part of Dublin as was his past." And "K" adds for himself, "How triumphantly true!" There is nothing true in it, for there is nothing decided in it. The man was afraid to decide anything. Everyman is localised insofar as he can only be himself. I can tell "K" definitely, without the slightest reservation, that however "great" O'Casey's talent may be or may become, his "future" will be as much a part of Dublin as was his past; just as Joyce carried the city to the end of his life in his heart and in his soul. In the last play written the identity is as clear and unmistakable as it is in the first one.

T. C. Murray, the dramatist *de facto*, and critic *de jure*, is also, very hot and bothered about O'Casey's way of playwrighting. Says he, "O'Casey took a strange twist after he had written his earlier plays, a lamentable thing to most of us. To discern the lamentable thing that has happened, we have only to recall those earlier masterpieces of his. One hears again and again, What's wrong with O'Casey? This is the question his best friends have long been asking." That's the question, Joxer; that's the question. His best friends! And doesn't he know them well!

*One early mornin' as I roved out,
I heard a man singin' with grrreat llaamentaation!*

Valentin Iremonger, a writer himself, commenting in *The Irish Times*, says, with hand on his troubled heart and a tear in his poetic eye, "I am still young enough to feel sorry—and a little angry—watching genius being squandered away and frittered away upon ephemeral concepts such as Mr. O'Casey has elected to promulgate." Imagine "electing to promulgate ephemeral concepts"! Still there's dignity and sorrow in the sentence. But comicality too. As if Father O'Flynn, putting his blackthorn in his pocket, said, suddenly, "Th' time for jokin's past—we must be sarious now." Mr. Iremonger is, presumably,

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a young fellow, so here's a bit of advice from an old fellow: Let him think a little longer before he writes some of his sentences. He is young enough to learn to write more clearly. I will give one instance of his thoughtless commenting as a critic of the drama. He is nearly distraught because of the difference between the way in which Feelim in one receives news of the death of his son and that in which Juno, in another play, receives news of the death of hers. Treating the play with the mind of a pacifist, rather than that of a critic, he fails to see the different circumstances, the different environment, the different psychological influences of friends and neighbours in the two plays; or the enormous effect they have on those who live among them. Mr. Iremonger—to give another instance of sleepy drama-criticism—resents the fact that *Oakleaves and Lavender* doesn't follow the pattern of realism of "the early plays, that made O'Casey so secure;" yet, when Feelim, the character in the play mentioned, reacts realistically to the killing of his son, and vows vengeance on the heads of those who did it, and their comrades who helped them to do it, Iremonger goes all white, and moans out a pacifistic sermon, reminding O'Casey that "two can play at that game"; which O'Casey knows—and more than two, for the matter of that; but all this is beside the point, for here Iremonger is judging a play, not as a drama critic, but as a pacifist. This critic heads his commentary with the title of "Rude Mechanicals." What are 'mechanicals,' and when do they become 'rude'? Conversely, what are gentle and good-mannered mechanicals? "Ghost dancers," he says again, "are devices long since popular with amateur dramatists everywhere." Everywhere? What is an amateur dramatist? And where's the everywhere where these and their ghostly dancers are to be found? When a statement like this is made, the critic should give instances of the numerous plays by amateur dramatists in which these ghostly dancers have appeared. Iremonger will never be much of a drama critic if he doesn't succeed in writing criticism a little more thoughtful than this sort of thing.

Mr. Gabriel Fallon, drama critic of the *The Standard*, listens to this tale of woe, and adds the tears of middle-age to the virgin tears of the younger Iremonger. Ay, indeed. "Even middle-age may drown an eye (why only one; why not the two?) unused to flow on being compelled to witness the incandescence of genius doused in an overflow of its own wilfulness." Another dignified sentence. He isn't done yet, though: "Unless there is a return to first principles, we shall all be forced to join our young poet in his anger and tears." What, all of you to be

forced to anger and tears? Unless O'Casey goes back to first principles. Really? All Eire in tears! Over O'Casey. That's too bad to be true. "How is it," Mr. Fallon asks, "that a number of English critics described *Red Roses For Me* as a magnificent piece of dramatic poetry?" O'Casey doesn't know, and isn't concerned very much about it. While reminding Mr. Fallon that all the English critics aren't English—Ivor Brown is a Scotsman; Mr. Trewin is a Cornishman; and Desmond MacCarthy must have come from somewhere out of Spain; it isn't the question of the goodness or badness of a play that is the more important thing; it is the going back on the idea that the drama must change and develop a new outlook, a broader scope, and a fresh style, if it is to live as an art alongside the art of architecture, of painting, and of music. In my opinion, the time has passed for a drama to devote its expression to one aspect of life alone, and to consider that aspect of life as dominant for the time the play takes to unfold itself; that in one play one aspect of life must be the beginning, the middle, and the end of it. Consistency of mood and of manner isn't always, indeed, not even often, found in life, and why should it then be demanded in a play? This new aspect of playwrighting which puzzled audiences here in 1929—and some of the critics too,—is now puzzling the Dublin critics in 1947, and provoking them to anger and tears. What angers most of them, however, is that it hasn't been altogether a failure. A jewel moved about in the hand shows many flashes of light and colour; and the human life, moved about by circumstances of tragedy and comedy, shows more than many flashes of diversity in the unity of its many-sided human nature. Of course, a great play may be written around one aspect of life, but it doesn't follow that this must be the one way forever in which dramatists are to show life on the stage to those interested in the theatre. Not of course that a fine play, or even a great play, may not again be written by a newer dramatist in the "realistic" manner; but it will need to be a fine one to lift itself from the sameness of the tens of thousands of realistic or naturalistic plays that have gone before it. They are as numerous as the shadowy, silvery pictures painted by Corot—hundreds of them, with additional hundreds of perfect imitations, so beloved of so many, especially by Æ; though few words of praise were given to the portraits he painted, the loveliest things Corot did. Why? Because the portraits were what only Corot could do, while the silvery landscapes could be done by a hand holding a brush with a little craft and trickery to aid it. Dramatists cannot go on

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imitating themselves; and, when they are tired of that, imitating others. They must change; they must experiment; they must develop, or try to do so, their power, if the drama is to live.

But are those "earlier plays" of O'Casey the great works they are said to be by O'Casey's "best friends"? And is the tear at this moment shed the genuine tear it is said to be? When these "early masterpieces" appeared first on the stage, did they get the applause they deserved from the eminent Irish critics of the day? Were these plays, when they appeared, "loved for the fresh fun they made in the theatre"? Did the then lower lights and the higher lights of Dublin think that these plays made O'Casey "secure" in the highlight of the drama? Let us see.

Here's what A. E. Malone (then considered an authority on the theatre), Malone with his pert moustache on his little, frightened face; here's what he said, "*The Plough And The Stars* isn't as good a play as *Juno*. It is a series of *tableaux vivants*. O'Casey is a photographic artist. In *The Plough* O'Casey strives after a literary quality of speech which is entirely alien to Dublin slum-dwellers. The play has the structure of the cinema and the revue. It is a series of scenes rather than a play. The Prostitute, Rosie Redmond, has no significance whatever (a touch of comedy here). The career of O'Casey induces fear for his future." As if afraid his readers might forget what he had said, he comes out again, even a little stronger: "Is O'Casey a dramatist? Is he but a combination of the cinema and the dictaphone? His plays are phases of Dublin life under conditions as abnormal as they are transient. O'Casey's humour is the humour of the music-hall, without the skill of the music-hall or the sharpened point of its wit." Well, there have been many good things in the music-hall, and will be again, please God; and I, for one, am in no way ashamed for anything of a music-hall nature appearing in the plays. But here we have a chap who wrote a big, big book, "a book of great authority," on the Irish Theatre, who couldn't, wouldn't make up his mind about poor O'Casey, and gave most of his criticism in a series of questions, because the thought was father to the wish.

Most people will remember the tremendous opposition the plays got from the Plain People; but was it worse than that of Liam O'Flaherty, who, in a letter denouncing Yeats's defence of the play, tersely informed Yeats and the world that "in his opinion *The Plough And The Stars* is a bad play." At the same time, in *The Irish Statesman*, F. R. Higgins, the

poet, came out with the revelation that "A new political quality, approved by the arrogance of the Gall, is the only quality for which O'Casey is offered applause. His is a technique based on the revue structure, in the quintessence of an all-Abbey burlesque, intensified by 'diversions' and Handy Andy incidents, with somewhat more original settings. His plays are but a laborious bowing on a one-string fiddle, and 'Fluther' is but the successor of Boyle's more lively ragtime. O'Casey in his new play entirely lacks the sincerity of an artist."

Well, there's the stern, quiet testimony of a poet, doing away with all the praise and good report of the Iremongers, the Fallons, and the Murrays. But there's another—Austin Clarke, a poet, too. He said, with the same poise and quietness, that "Several writers of the new Irish school (himself included of course) believe that Mr. O'Casey's work is a crude exploitation of our poorer people in the Anglo-Irish tradition that is now moribund."

O'Casey exploiting the poor! And now they want him to go on with this nefarious practice. Pilfer the lot of them; take the last penny from them, then leave them to God! I wonder is it really O'Casey who does this bad thing? I shouldn't put anything past him, for he carries the Red Star in the lapel of his coat, emblazoned with those dangerous weapons—the hammer and the sickle.

But we haven't come to the end of the list yet. There are a few left still. There's Professor Daniel Corkery, the man who found the hidden Ireland. In an article praising Clifford Odets' *Golden Boy* he shows how this play far surpasses the "realistic" plays of O'Casey. And since *Golden Boy* is but a third-rate play, then O'Casey's realistic plays must be low down, deep, among the dead men. One more from others: R. M. Fox of Dublin, a writer, in the *New Statesman* in an issue of August, 1928, calls these plays *The Drama of the Dregs*. He says, "Peasant drama in Ireland has been succeeded by slum drama, though such an authority as W. B. Yeats tells us that the peasant drama is done, and slum drama will have a very short reign. As entertainment, this kind of drama is permissible. Neither the peasant nor the slum play deals in any direct fashion with typical problems of a group of people. But group problems may not lend themselves to drama, certainly not to melodrama, and so on the stage they are neglected. Besides entertainment we need truth." Well, there's R. M. Fox for you, telling you and me about the drama; all about the drama. He seems to think truth should be entertaining, though I know an Irish proverb that says truth is always bitter.

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It wouldn't be fair to forget the rather recent roar of Brinsley MacNamara about the "vulgarity of O'Casey's worthless plays that have always been given far too much honour and attention by the Abbey Theatre." So there is heard a pretty fine chorus against these "masterpieces" that have made "O'Casey so secure in the theatre"; from the sparrow-like chirrup of Mr. Austin Clarke to the ready and heady roar of Brinsley MacNamara.

Now these who say no are just as intelligent, just as important as those who have come after them. Their criticism is as likely to be right, certainly as sincere, as the criticism of our present-day complainers; so what is the playwright to do? Here we have a vociferous assembly sighing away and shouting down the "early O'Casey masterpieces"; men of gifts, some of them intellectuals, excellent in various ways, declaiming against these early works as bad plays, bad art, exploitation of Eire's poorer people, and generally deciding that O'Casey was equipped only with the technique of the revue, the quick eye of the photographer, the ready memory of the dictaphone; but having nothing at all of the dramatist in either head or heart. And yet the present-day critics implore O'Casey to go back to "first principles." It all shows how little our critics know, or remember; and how silly they show themselves to be. It shows that the coming dramatist must, if he has courage and sense, go his own way, like Seosamh Mac Grianna. It tells O'Casey that he mustn't pay any attention to these chiming bells of St. Mary's ordering him back to the land of beginning again.

It shows, too, that Eire needs critics more than she needs dramatists. We have had good plays, good actors, good producers, but always weak, timid, selfish, and damned bad critics. We have had no drama critic since Yeats, who, with his hazel wand and the red berry tied to it, tried to exorcise vulgarity and commercialism from the theatre of his day. But Yeats was a critic only in his spare time, and then, only of the theatre insubstantial. He analysed the spirit of the theatre, without very much concern for the needs of the body, seeming to look upon the drama as a disembodied spirit, and failing to see that only body and soul united can make a perfect being. He tried to change the theatre of the world through the few things done on the few square feet of the Abbey stage; and though he failed, he gave us a beginning. He had an influence and an effect upon the theatre that will, I think, never depart, though it may flow or twist into newer forms and a stranger style.

The Irish Theatre needs a critic who will set down the comments of the chronicles of the stage with precision, knowledge, and above all, with courage; refusing to condemn the new because he does not understand it (like the later pictures of Picasso), or dislikes it; a critic able to enter all her halls with confidence, from the highest thing the Theatre has ever done to the dialogue and diversions of a Jimmy O'Dea on the *Olympia* stage. A critic who will never be influenced by his paper's policy or profit; who will be unafraid of clique or cleric; who, in his criticism, will separate himself from the seduction of a friend, or from animosity towards an enemy; who will know the theatre of the continent as well as he knows his own, far back, and present achievement; a critic who will look upon a play as a play, indifferent to whether it hurts or heals. Where is there a critic like that in Eire? Is there one of them who isn't afraid of his paper boss; afraid of his clique of friends; afraid of his clerical consorts; half afraid of his own thoughts? Nowhere; not yet, anyhow.

Now look, young dramatists, you have a theatre to develop and to defend, and it is for this reason that I appeal to the younger (and so braver) writers in Ireland to-day who still go in half fear of clerical and clique; a theatre of which we can be proud and of which others who know speak in high praise. Now, this isn't mere rhetorical bounce on the part of O'Casey. Listen to what George Jean Nathan, the famous American drama critic, says of the Irish Theatre: "I take it there is small critical question, save alone in the lands of dictated appraisal, that the modern Irish drama leads what is left of the European theatre. Our own theatre is quick and alive and in many ways admirable, but its plays come mainly out of galvanic impulse rather than deep meditation. And only out of deep meditation is true drama born. Surely in searching the stage of the world theatre of the later years it is difficult to find a body possessed of the Celtic poetic pulse. Surely, except in sporadic instances, that quality which insinuates into the mind and emotion its peculiarly lingering after-image is rare in the plays of men nurtured in other soils. It isn't, certainly, that all the plays that are coming out of Eire soil are masterpieces. Very, very far from that. But, as I have written in the past, in even the poorest of them, one finds a probity, a passionate undertone, a brave resolve, and a hint of spiritual music that one all too infrequently encounters in the present dramaturgy of other peoples. And in the finer plays there is a poetic sweep, a surge of human emotions, and a warm, golden glow that even the best drama of other countries most often lacks."

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This quotation forms part of a preface to a book, published by Random House, New York, and titled *Five Great Modern Irish Plays*, costing ninety-five cents. The sale of this book will probably run to hundreds of thousands of copies; so, one can see how many will come to regard the Irish Theatre as something to be held in honour, and spoken of with respect. Readers will accept the statement on the flap of the jacket which tells the buyer that "No nation has made a richer contribution to the recent literature of the Theatre than Ireland." Than Ireland.

The *Times Literary Supplement*, in an article on the Irish Theatre, says, in April, 1940 (not so long ago), "The truth seems to be that that great trio, Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory, are mighty yet. The drama that they founded has not been continued on the lines they meant; but even what Mr. O'Connor sees as tin shacks preserve something of their design. Most of that drama, however far from the Ireland of Yeats, is essentially and peculiarly Irish. Is there another 'national drama' in the world with so much chance of achieving a great future by being faithful to the fundamentals of the past"?

This is a big heraldry of Ireland's theatrical fame. It would be a shame to let the colours fade, or the gold to tarnish. We should try to keep the colours bright, or even make them brighter. It is an expansive shield, with room for many new designs and waxing symbols; and we can't afford to let any timid critic push a hand aside eager to put a new one there.

In everything but politics (and, perhaps, even in politics), Ireland is lagging behind—dragging her feet after her like a half-nourished child. In the novel and the short story, Ireland holds her own; but in music, in painting (imagine a critic of Dublin having to rush to the National Library to find out a thing or two about Picasso!), we are still in the age of infancy. Let us, at least, hold on to our place in Drama. She won't hold it long if the present-day drama critics have their way; if destructive criticism takes the form of condemning every new thought, every new style used to widen the achievement of the living theatre; or if constructive criticism takes the form of Brinsley MacNamara's purification, when he advises that audiences should "receive a play that had no appeal, or was simply boring, in stony silence—just no applause at the end, no calls, the merciful fall of the curtain putting a finish to the matter." Finis, the end. No applause, no calls, just the merciful fall of the curtain—all together, boys and girls! Was there ever before such an example of telepathetic regimentation

suggested to save the Irish Theatre? Never; and, let us hope, there never will be again; for the thing's impossible.

So, young Irish dramatists, go ahead, and don't bother about the critics. They are no use to you. They don't know their own minds. The most of them are influenced by their jobs. Wait till a good critic appears, and then stop awhile to listen. You'll soon get to know him when he (or she) comes, though with Ireland as she is, there'll be but a poor chance for the poor man to live or write. While the dramatists wait for the coming of a pure and proper critic, there is nothing to be done but to go on doing their best to keep Eire in the forefront of the world's drama. Should the shadow of Censorship steal over that deep meditation, mentioned by George Jean Nathan, let the dramatists turn their face to London and New York; for, if there be fullness of merit in what they create, their work will find there, sooner or later, the fulfilment of production. Take ye no thought for the contempt these places are held in by some of the critics, such as (in reference to a play of mine own) *The Standard's* "How is it, some may ask, that a number of English critics have described *Red Roses For Me* as a magnificent piece of dramatic poetry." (As a matter of fact, this play came to London, not because of any admiration for it by any English critic, or even a non-English critic; but because it was liked by an Irish woman, whom I did not know till weeks after the first performance—Una, the daughter of O'Rolleston, the Irish poet, and founder, or co-founder with Yeats, of the Irish Literary Society).

So go ahead, my hearties of Irish dramatists, for Eire, and for New York and London. Remember that every Irish dramatist, the oul' ones as well as the young, longs in his heart—and not in a corner either, but in the core—to have his play's name shine in the red, yellow, and blue lights of Broadway and the streets of London's West End. And to quote Nathan again, let every dramatist be modest enough to be "a pilgrim on the road to a Mecca that is ever just over the skyline."

PADRAIC COLUM

Yeats's Lyrical Poems

THE passage that he made from the world of reverie to the world of affairs was an arduous one for Yeats: even when he had made it he had to command himself—

*Hands, do what you're bid:
Bring the balloon of the mind
That bellies and drags in the wind
Into its narrow shed.*

But if the passage had not been arduous tensions would not have gone into his poetry, and tensions, by putting personal history behind creation, make high poetry.

This passage from the world of reverie to the world of affairs was not made involuntarily: it could only have been made through courage, strategy, discipline, and with the sanction of a philosophy. That sanction he might have taken from Heraclitus with its philosophy of movement through opposites (with a glance towards St. Augustine who spoke of the world's beauty being composed of opposites and quoted Ecclesiasticus, "Against evil is good, and against death is life, so is the godly against the sinner: so look for in all the works of the highest, two and two, one against one."); he did not; he made it for himself and by himself. The story we get as we read Yeats's *Collected Poems* and his *Last Poems* is that of a poet given to reveries, leisurely minded, delighting in visions "of the dark leopards of the moon" who naturalised himself in a world where he was faced with his opposite.

Locality, he must have thought at his beginning, could hold down the balloon of his mind. He turned to the laureate of his own county, Sligo, to Allingham, noting that one has to merge oneself in locality—"to have loved with a sense of possession even the roadside bushes where the roadside cottagers hung their clothes to dry." Here is his first foothold. But the young Yeats was a man of understanding, even of great understanding, and he knew that Allingham's sense of locality was

not enough. His poetry is only of memories—"memories, be it noticed, of things and more than of passions and persons."

Even with this awareness there are no tensions in his early poetry; the faint opposites easily, too easily merge—

*Ah, do not mourn, he said
That we are tired, for other loves await us;
Hate on and love through unrepining hours.
Before us lies eternity; our souls
Are love, and a continual farewell.*

or—

*He made the world to be a grassy road
Before her wandering feet.*

The world of action was at such a distance from his world of reverie, ceremony, ritual that its inhabitants filled him with astonishment; for him they were mythical figures—Parnell, Oscar Wilde (for he always believed that Wilde was essentially a man of action), Captain Shawe-Taylor. Even when he began writing for the theatre his sense of opposition was slight. What is the conflict in *The King's Threshold*?—I mean *The King's Threshold* before the death of Terence MacSweeney gave it its right, its solemn ending? For all its high talk about the opposition between a noble race and a world made ignoble through a lack of art, it was a difference between officialdom and a poet's wounded *amour propre*. Seanchan is, in the first version produced, the Yeats of the early poems, a man of reverie. One can contrast him with a poet of an historical episode: Ferdusi was to have been paid in gold for the verses of the *Shah Nemeh*; the treasurer persuaded the King to pay him in silver; Ferdusi's *amour propre* was wounded; no doubt he thought that Persian poetry was insulted through him and that the Persian and even the human race would be the losers by the king's lack of vision. Ferdusi came back at the court with, as they would say in the American theatre, a wallop. He gave the silver in tips to the bath attendants, fled the country, and wrote a satire that pilloried the king. Ferdusi is representative, and his opposition to the court (he was sentenced to be trampled by a couple of elephants but he escaped the trampling) is a real opposition.

I am not writing to minimise anything Yeats ever wrote but to indicate how far he had to go to become the alert and combative man that was his opposite. Nor would I underrate his early poems: *To an Isle in Water*, *Down by the Salley Gardens*, *The Lake Isle of Innisfree*, *The White Birds*, *Who Goes*

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with *Fergus, The Song of Wandering Aengus, Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland, The Ragged Wood, The Happy Townland*, will always be for me lovely poems.

The quest that engaged him he revealed in poem and comment:

*By the help of an image
I call to my own opposite, summon all
That I have handled least, least looked upon.*

or—

"I will then compare the culture of the Renaissance which seems to me founded not on self-knowledge, but on the knowledge of some other self, Christ or Caesar, not on delicate sincerity, but on imitative energy."

It was the quest of a personality whose attitudes, being the opposite of the attitudes he had lived, would create the highest tensions in a life he would attain to. The result of his enterprise first enters into his collection *The Green Helmet*—

*If any man drew near
When I was young . . .*

The poet has got what he sought and what he advised other poets to seek, a living speech as against a bookish speech. His work in the theatre has given it to him and it is a gift of lasting value. And yet the poet who has found these plain words and this firm rhythm has to arouse himself now and again. "The world lives as long ago," he declares, though not with great assurance; the insignia of another regime has to be cast aside—

*And while we're in our laughing, weeping fit,
Hurl helmets, crowns, and swords into the pit.*

The poet writes out of a new career, a career that he has not entered on casually, but has been created by him. He has a theatre; a new group of associates; J. M. Synge is with him; Synge is producing and is dying. Now a poet who has several books famous behind him is making a new start—a notable happening, and we are aware of the venturesomeness of it. Back of the triumphant poems in this collection, *A Woman Homer Sung, Words, The Mask, Brown Penny* are situations that arouse will and energy—imitative energy as against delicate sincerity.

The Mountain Tomb is in a collection that comes next, *Responsibilities*. With its reference to the esoteric this beautiful poem might be an early one. But it has the loneliness of something looked back to, and there are oppositions in it. Against the stirless figure there is the pride of manhood; against the gloom lit by everlasting tapers, roses, wine, fiddle and clarionet, against wisdom, festivity. *Responsibilities*, published just as the first world war started, shows that rare power, the power of initiation. Yeats, putting himself for the first time in the role of "public man" can write those vigorous tirades, the one against the people who do not support the Municipal Gallery, the other against the generation that succeeded O'Leary's. And what a striking poem he makes out of his relegation of his mythologies to other poets! There are *The Magi* and *The Cold Heaven* which are departures, the one with its theme, the other with its music.

The Magi, in its imagery and rhythm, might have been in *The Wind Among the Reeds*, but its climaxing line puts it with poems that Yeats has yet to write—

The uncontrollable mystery on the bestial floor.

This is the theme of *Leda and the Swan*, brutishness as the other side of divinity, divinity that has to have a part in brutishness. The clear, piercing music of *The Cold Heaven* is at a distance from the burthened music of the early poems, and in it the light that riddles the disembodied is set against the cold of the no-place, the sky. In the poem that gives title to the next collection, *The Wild Swans at Coole*, there is coldness, but it is the coldness of place.

Once, walking with him by that lake he said to me, "I want to get rid of the reds and yellows Shelley brought back from Italy, and get into my poems the greyness of these clouds and stones." He tell us in verse that he and his friends meditated on the influence of this landscape:—

*We dreamed that a great painter had been born
To cold Clare rock and Galway rock and thorn,
To that stern colour and that delicate line
That are our secret discipline
Wherein the gazing heart doubles her might.*

He has re-discovered the Irish landscape, a different one from the friendly, rather cosy landscape of the early poems; the notes are now "stern" and "delicate."

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With this new landscape a new speech is to be noted. Yeats in the old days used to tell the young poets that they should never use a word that a journalist might use. In connection with that prohibition Sygne remarked to me, "Words have a cycle; when they become too worn for the journalists the poets can use them again." Yeats with the speech he now uses proves that Sygne was right. What adjective could be more to the journalist's hand than 'brilliant' in connection with swans? And now that very word exalts the line—"I have looked upon those brilliant creatures." "Mysterious, beautiful" have the look of a combination that might have fallen under Yeats's ban ten years before; he has made it valid. Words, we are now made to see, get their value from their setting and from the atmosphere that suffuses the piece they are in. Later Yeats is able to take away from the journalists words equally ordinary and use them with shattering effect—"The Roman Empire stood appalled." There are other poems that anticipate another development: the baldheaded scholars who annotate him can never understand their Catullus; the butterfly that has learnt to take roses for his meat was once a teacher with a great book. Yeats has perceived other opposites—wisdom and passion or erudition and sensuality; brutishness and divinity. He has a new speech, too; he has looked upon a figure who has made the most arduous passage of all, that between wiffulness and justice; Dante—

*Being mocked by Guido for his lecherous life
Derided and deriding, driven out
To climb the stair and eat the bitter bread,
He found the unpersuadable justice, he found
The most exalted lady loved by a man.*

Poets are learned men; learning, after all, is their milieu; great poets are great clerks: names like Dante, Chaucer, Goethe, Shelley, Browning, force us to remember this. Yeats, too, was a very learned man even though part of his learning was on the quaint and curious side, his Rosicrucian, Cabalistic, astrological lore. The value of learning is in what one can get out of it, and Yeats got masterly things out of his particular lore. In his later life he read the main philosophers and passed their ideas through his mind. He became deeply interested in the philosophy of history. History became a preoccupation with him as it did with Eliot and the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake*—not history as chronicle, but history as some revelation of the

destiny of man, and, as such, impinging on the individual. Yeats was tremendously impressed with Spengler's tragic vision of history even though he knew there was too much front to it. "One would have to be omniscient to write what Spengler proposed," he said when we talked about it once. But even before he had read *The Decline of the West*, his own vision of history was, I think, of beginning, strain, catastrophe, civilizations as of great temporal movements of man's creativeness.

In connection with his interest in history, the two great 'Byzantium' poems should be noted. Byzantine history fascinated him, I know. That in a mind possessed by Talismans like Yeats's, might be because of the gleaming 'B' and 'y' and 'z' in the name. But leaving aside this superficiality he found in the Byzantine a civilization of ceremony, ritual, abstraction, producing, with violence all around, subtle-minded men.

And abstraction is part of the Irish mind, an interest in pattern for the sake of pattern. In this Ireland faces towards Byzantium. *Finnegans Wake* is Byzantine. There may be an historical reason for this nostalgia in two of our great writers. The first high civilization that Ireland came in contact with—and how the contact was made is yet a mystery—was the Byzantine: the Book of Kells and the monumental crosses are there to show how much Byzantium was able to give to early Ireland and how aptly early Ireland was able to use what Byzantium brought her. Johannes Scotus Eiregina was the first to interpret Byzantium to the western world.

It is surprising how many of the great later poems are in a single collection, *The Tower*: here one finds *Sailing to Byzantium*, *I Saw a Staring Virgin Stand*, *Leda and the Swan*, *Nineteen and Nineteen*, *Among School Children*, *Coole Park* 1929. In following collections we have two other poems that are on a level with these, *Byzantium* and *The Municipal Art Gallery Re-visited*. About the *Crazy Jane* and the like in the last collections I have mixed feelings: they have nervous energy, they are never flat, but I think their fleshliness is too intentional.

The outstanding poems begin with a plain statement—

*This is no country for old men; the young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees . . .*

or—

Many ingenious and lovely things are gone.

or—

*A sudden blow; the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl.*

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or—

I saw a staring virgin stand.

or—

I walk through the long schoolroom questioning.

or—

I meditate upon a swallow's flight.

or—

The unpurged images of the day recede.

or—

Around me the images of thirty years.

If we compare these with the plain lines of an earlier poem we learn something about Yeats's developed art—

*The fascination of what's difficult
Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
Spontaneous joy and natural content
Out of my heart.*

An incantation is in the plain lines of the later poems.

I shall end this survey by considering two poems he wrote between his sixtieth and seventieth year. In *Sailing to Byzantium* he opposes the 'sensual music' that is in us and around us to the 'monuments of unfading intellect' that give permanence to all that is in that fleeting music. Yeats was never so remote from human conditions, not even when he called on the Everlasting Voices or visioned the Hosting of the Sidhe as in this evocation of 'the holy city of Byzantium'; never was he so plain in language, so sparse and simple in his images: due to the contrast in images, the tattered coat on the stick and the golden bird beside the gold of the mosaic wall, there is an extraordinary richness in the poem. The poet's words trouble, rouse, exalt us, and at the end leave us in a stupor. We have gone from fields where there is a tattered coat on a stick and the music of time and have come to a court where there are hieratic figures and the music that is outside time. Is this sublimation all we can come to? All. But the possibility of the journey is part of the strangeness of human destiny. Fascination is what this poem has, and I know no other poem that has this for its quality.

In that other great poem of this decade, the chorus from *The Resurrection*, the golden bird and the mosaic wall will

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have to give place to other creations, for no more than the Roman Empire can the Byzantine endure—

*Another Troy must rise and set,
Another lineage feed the crow.*

The poet's preoccupation with astrology has become prophetic; he makes us feel that the constellations are the sponsors of those tremendous displacements in civilizations that are the matter of history and that wider history that is myth and legend. *I saw a staring virgin stand* is the most visionary and the most dramatic of poems.



ROBERT GREACEN



The Way We Write Now

THERE has occurred in the past few years another phase of Romanticism: and this, to my mind, rather than the so-called "Augustan" quality of the eighteenth century, has, broadly speaking, been the driving force behind the finest literature in the language. Thus the theme of this essay is the orientation of imaginative writing in English over approximately the last decade. It will not be possible, in brief compass, to make an extensive survey, but rather to go on subjective excursions here and there and to give "random samples" of work by the younger writers, in particular those who began to stand out above the shrill War-time Babel. Above all, I hope to convey something of the "atmosphere," to hint at those background qualities of social structure and attitude that go to its making. And I propose later in the essay to discuss the Irish scene and deal with the specific contribution of our own writers.

The word "Romanticism" is notoriously a misnomer, for it is vague and at best a convenient title. Yet a peculiarly marked attitude to life, to the suffering implicit in life and more especially the willingness to accept the reality of death cannot be described so simply in any other way. Some attempt should be made to bring the true meaning of Romanticism into clearer focus. In his penetrating recent study, *Art and Social Responsibility*, Alex Comfort provides a convenient starting-point for discussion, when he writes:—

"These terms, classic and romantic, stand for more than difference of style. The classic sees man as master and the romantic as victim of his environment. That seems to me to be the real difference. I regard the periods of English literature as an alteration between these two concepts. It is as if the awareness of death, the factor which, at root, determines the degree to which we feel masters of our circumstances, ebbed and flowed, alternately emphasised and obscured as a factor in interpretive art. The classical periods are periods of economic and mental security when the drive is towards action and where

the majority of the people is in full possession of a satisfactory interpretation of the universe and of themselves—religious or political, it can be either.”

The Georgians, to use a generic term of necessity inaccurate, drew on a watered-down Romantic impulse; Yeats hardened and became diamond-colder with the years; Walter de la Mare has consistently inhabited a strange inner world of fantastic loveliness and dread, using this world of lyrical black-magic to interpret known, tangible things. It is T. S. Eliot who has come nearest to the classical pattern, to the drily formalised and academic approach. And it is Eliot who has been father-in-poetry of the Auden school of the nineteen-thirties, though they learnt their politics elsewhere: the genesis of this movement may be described as by Eliot out of Freud and Marx.

Yet the “Pylon” school, for all the faults accompanying a rather synthetic approach, was both desirable and necessary. This appears to have been in Mr. Scarfe’s mind when, in his *Auden and After* he insisted on W. H. Auden’s importance *historically* rather than on his intrinsic importance as a poet. On the other hand, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNeice, both of whom started writing under the same influences as Auden, are probably superior *as poets*. Not only in poetry but in prose also was this desire for finding a rational explanation of physical and mental phenomena the dominant idea—it is convenient in writing of literature generally to pay most attention to the poets for they, by their very nature, after all, are concerned with intensity and concentration of expression. Prose writers like Leslie Halward, Christopher Isherwood, Walter Allen, V. S. Pritchett, merely to gather together a few typical names, showed in their early work an overwhelming respect for conciseness, for elimination of ornament, for stark reporting—“reportage”—concern for society at large and its problems rather than for the individual and *his* problems within the social framework. Roughly speaking, according to their code, to these writers Gorki was of considerably greater stature than D. H. Lawrence and Dryden superior to William Blake.

Yet one must remember that although the social, political and philosophical climate of the Thirties tended to sprout writers of the “New Signatures,” “New Verse,” “New Writing,” type, with their insistent and clamant “new”-ness, there were others working who from their own inclination or lack of interest in “realism” stood outside the rose-red gates.

The Sitwell trio would not capitulate to the supercharged political atmosphere, insisting on the rarity of the artist, his need to be private and, if necessary, a little inconsistent.

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Curiously enough, Edith Sitwell was to gain much of her greatness as a poet in the present decade, just as Osbert Sitwell was to produce autobiographical work of an unusual strength and luminosity and finish. Then there was that rare phenomenon both in prose and poetry, Dylan Thomas, who made an appearance on the literary scene to dazzle his peacock's feathers in the grey flatness of the few remaining pre-War years. A novelist who resisted the general tendency was Graham Greene with his Roman Catholic awareness of Evil. One does not need to be of his religion to feel that power behind Greene's novels which lights up the cobwebbed corners of his characters, reaching the human substance that directs each drab shadow.

Yet for all this diversity the romantic impulse remained disorganised, sporadic, occasional, until attention became focussed on the movement styled somewhat grandly—the New Apocalypse—in which the prime movers were Henry Treece, J. F. Hendry, and in its later stages Alex Comfort. Perhaps this movement performed its most useful work in helping to maturity several poets, short-story writers, critics, and at least one novelist in Alex Comfort, who might otherwise have lost their way in the tangle of contemporary ideologies. As it happened, these young men, working independently, came to hold a number of ideas in common, before discovering each other and forming a group for co-operative effort.

The four major influences on those writers, who found effective means of expression at about the same time,—the early years of the war—were Blake, Kafka, Jung and D. H. Lawrence. And it is from such prophets—for prophets they were—that the Apocalyptic philosophy drew its sustenance. Their philosophy is summarised in the idea that man has himself become implicated in the machine he once tended, with the result that he has now found himself submerged, sterile. He must free his personality and make himself a complete man, responsible, vocal and harmonious in his whole being. Thus they hoped to bring about a fresh awareness of the possibilities of a romantic attitude in liberating the mind and the emotions, in making possible spontaneity and wonder, the essence of true poetry.

I have devoted a good deal of space to the New Apocalypse because it illustrates the general text of the essay—that is, the force of Romanticism—and because of its theoretical implications which those interested may explore in detail in *The New Apocalypse*, *The White Horseman* and *The Crown and the Sickle*. Not all of the romantic writers have been associated intimately with the Apocalypse, though all of them would be willing to subscribe to the main tenets of the Hendry diagnosis

and synthesis. Some of those I have in mind would include prose writers and poets such as Lawrence Durrell, Ruthven Todd, Anne Ridler, Wrey Gardiner, Derek Stanford, John Bayliss and Maurice Lindsay.

How is this philosophy reflected in the work of its chief adherents? Apart from their generalised romantic approach it is interesting that they are capable of wide variety of theme and treatment. Henry Treece has recreated the medieval imagery of knights and shepherds:—

*Proud as an ancient prayer-wheel, the Prince
Stepped with a purple flutter from the tomb . . .*

Nicholas Moore saw with the innocent eye, achieving a remarkable spontaneity:—

*. I see
The young man of evening lift his face to the sun
Out of Europe's ruin Love come to everyone.*

The poems of G. S. Fraser are delicate and brittle, immediately human and have often a sad, wistful humour, while a fellow-Scot, J. F. Hendry, the chief spokesman and metaphysician of the movement, wrote many beautiful and subtle lyrics such as *The Constant North*:

*Encompass me, my lover
With your eyes wide calm.
The noonday shadows are assembling doom
Yet sun remains when I remember them;
And death if it should come,
Must fall like quiet snow from such clear skies.*

*Minutes we snatched from the unkind winds
Are grown into daffodils by the sea's
Edge, mocking its green miseries;
Yet I seek you hourly still, over
Another Atlantic loveliness, blind
As a sightless needle, held by the North we always
have in mind.*

It is in Alex Comfort, the youngest of the romantics, that one finds a combination of most of these elements—pure lyrical quality, originality of imagery and an instinctive craftsmanship. Comfort's poetry is organic; a doctor by profession, he draws on natural history, on medical and surgical images, on the minutiae of fleeting observed things in everyday life; his novels tend to be somewhat less developed in dramatic form and are detailed in the Zola manner; his criticism is profound, vigorous and mature, deserving of more attention from the critics than his novels, but getting less.

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The doctrine of anarchism in England, chiefly publicised by Herbert Read, and based on essentially romantic premisses steadily claims more and more adherents. Mr. Read, as art critic, poet, political theorist and publisher, is responsible by example and by virtue of sympathetic criticism, for the development of many talents. It is also interesting that a poet like Stephen Spender, in his later development has come more nearly to show that his work is losing the classical edge which he attempted to achieve in the Thirties. Nor can one speak of Romanticism over the past few years without a reference to Sidney Keyes, whose precocious mastery countered in some measure his early death.

Turning to Irish literature, there is a group which has gone away from a spurious form of Romanticism to a genuine one of their own making, based on the mythology of the Gaelic tradition and on Gaelic systems of word-structure and imagery. But the idea of Romanticism has long been distrusted by writers less consciously influenced by Gaelic modes, simply because it has been misunderstood, being confused with sentimentality and vagueness. However, in view of the sense in which the word is used in this essay I shall venture to apply it in the more valid manner.

In the modern Irish novel may be found a quality of individualism that can be pushed by the less sure writer almost to the point of social irresponsibility. Writers such as O'Flaherty, Sean O'Faolain, Frank O'Connor and Peadar O'Donnell write with passionate regard for individual people and folk-idiom: and they try to see objectively their characters and the torrent of events. But their realism such as it is, with its curious affinity to the Russians', contains its own peculiar poetry. Their fiction—as that of Kate O'Brien and Elizabeth Bowen—has been discussed and analysed by other critics and is not sufficiently relevant to require extensive treatment in this context.

Two writers, both using the short-story form primarily and younger than those named above,—and therefore in greater need of attention in this essay,—are Michael McLaverty and Mary Lavin. Their work is superficially realistic in so far as their characters often achieve concreteness and roundness: which is a way of saying that their creators deal only in *known* people, that they have not conjured up characters between passages of prose description. But the undertones are undeniably romantic, anti-materialistic; both McLaverty and Miss Lavin reach out beyond the confines of the frequently drab world of their men and women. To the Catholic people especially of the little farms of the Bann and Lagan valleys, to

fisherfolk, to old men insulated from their kin in chill workhouse wards, to mothers harassed by pinching and scraping to keep their children "respectable," Michael McLaverty brings a sympathy and a suppleness of approach that would, in the hands of a less certain artist, fall headlong into the ruts of sentimentality and easy writing.

Not least of McLaverty's gifts is the way spontaneous dialogue, laden with idiomatic phrase and possessed of quiet rhythm, serves the purpose of narration; and one is often reminded of his love for animals and of natural sights and sounds. Two paragraphs from his first novel, *Call My Brother Back*, give a representative cross-section:—

"In front of him a gull was flying into the wind and the rain, banking and dipping but never turning. And sitting huddled and sheltered Colm let his thoughts wander to it . . . Poor lonely bird! The rain will get into its yellow eyes; its wing feathers, blue and smooth as a beach stone, will ruffle with wet. In their holes in the sand the puffins are warm, the rain won't get near them. The spiders that live in the rock-cracks will gather up their legs for fear of it; the cruel rain will tear their webs. The stones and leaves will let it slide over them. The beasts in the fields will stand against it; and the hens will hunch their backs and shake it from them! . . . A trickle of cold rain dribbled down his neck and banished his thoughts in a shiver. He drew in his breath with a hiss and rose to his feet.

The cloud was now drifting towards the Mull of Kintyre; to the right an arc of rainbow hugged the land, its curve increasing as the rain thinned. The evening sun shook itself free from its cage of clouds and a whin-gold light winged slowly across the fields. Suddenly the colours of the rainbow flamed and burst in liquid brilliance; and looking at it the boy's heart ached with a sweet, yearning sadness."

Miss Lavin has a woman's sharp eye for detail and she is perhaps more of a storyteller *per se* than McLaverty; her people are the ordinary people—if you like the "plain people"—of this country, sometimes caught in ordinary postures, sometimes finding themselves in unusual situations. Only in Synge-like "romantic" stories such as *The Green Grave and the Black Grave* is Miss Lavin swathed in that dangerous mist that does be assailing writers who put out to sea in the failing Celtic twilight. It is in stories like *At Sallygap*, *Love is for Lovers*, *Miss Holland*, and in the deliciously humorous *The Joyride* that her characteristics as a writer come into daylight. The quality of a writer is best seen in the evocation of sentiment that does

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not slide into sentimentality, as when Miss Lavin writes, with a surrealist touch, in *Lilacs*:—

"She would only be thinking of things; this thing and that thing; things of no account; silly things. Like the times she lay in bed and thought of a big lilac tree sprouting up through the boards of the floor, bending the big bright nails, sending splinters of wood flying till they hit off the window-panes. The tree always had big pointed bunches of lilac blossom all over it; more blossoms than leaves. That just showed, Stacy thought, what nonsense it was. You never saw more blossoms than leaves. But the blossoms weighed down towards her where she lay shivering, and they touched her face."

Some Irish prose writers have fairly recently poked their heads into the high air and delivered *ex cathedra* statements on contemporary Irish poetry—that is, they have been at pains to insist that there is no such thing. Their attitude is uncommonly like that of the self-righteous sub-editorials in the English newspapers during the War when they anonymously demanded—let us hope more in sorrow than in anger—"Where are the War poets?" One indignant poet answered them—"right under your nose," he said and proceeded to give an account of the poetry then being written, often under the most trying conditions of active service or civilian isolation. At least two of the most original spirits—Sidney Keyes and Alan Lewis—died of war injuries, undiscovered and unsung by the leader-writers, but known and appreciated by their contemporaries. Presumably when Irish poets are established elsewhere critics at home may reluctantly be compelled to discover them. But these words are intended as an aside . . .

The period of the nineteen-thirties in this country was not productive of much verse. Yeats was still alive and the shadow of the colossus obscured the figures of other poets and made them seem still smaller and even more blurred. The long-drawn-out honeymoon of the Twilight was ending and Yeats could well preach "bare hypnotic words" to the empty galleries that Irish poets should "sing whatever is well made" and proclaim:—

*The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

F. R. Higgins was producing full-blooded and delicate poems, but seemed cramped by his dependence on the Master who insisted on the application of the poetic rules that were peculiarly suitable for himself.

Yet in the heart of the country Patrick Kavanagh then wrote simple though lovely lyrics that gave little indication of the bitter strength and deep frustration that was later to be revealed in *The Great Hunger*. He fulfills Comfort's definition of Romanticism in seeing man as victim of his environment, and protests "Maguire was faithful unto death"—the death of the spirit. Other poets such as Blanaid Salkeld, using the form of the verse play, Leslie Daiken and Ewart Milne were demanding that the revolt against environment should be canalised into effective action; and in the Spanish Civil conflict they saw a cause to be proclaimed.

Not until the early years of the War did there seem to be any new emergent trend in Irish writing; and when it did come, it showed itself as a re-awakening in poetry from an unusual quarter—the Northern province. There could be many explanations why this should have been so: writers south of that wobbly line known as the Border no longer drew on the sources of a dynamic nationalism, whereas sensitive young people in the North (a lost province long dormant) turned to give expression to the new social factors produced by Ulster's part in the War. All were pacific, some convinced pacifists; they challenged and repudiated the weakness and compromise, the essential rottenness of an order in which poverty and organised brutality were glibly accepted as God-granted.

Much of this writing challenged comparison with that of English and Southern Irish contemporaries. The chief characteristics of this work—by W. R. Rodgers, John Hewitt, Roy McFadden, John Boyd, Colin Middleton (the latter primarily known as a painter) to mention a few names—were intensity and firmness of outline broad-based on an essential simplicity of conception. One was immediately aware of the influences closely associated with the romantic impulse: each might have cried with W. R. Rodgers:—

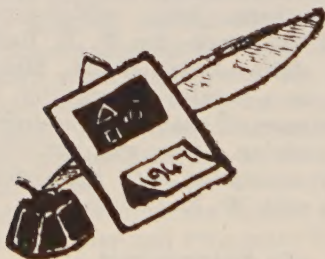
*It is a pity distance puts
Ten-league boots on brutality.*

A few of these Northmen have published in book form, but it is still necessary for the interested to unearth the relevant periodicals and anthologies. Certainly, although there has not been sufficient cohesion and agreement on basic principles to have formed a movement as such, this awakening across the Border seems one of the really significant developments of the past few years. And poetry in the South, too, has found its strong new voices of protest, though fewer in number—and I

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would particularly mention the work of the young Dubliner, Valentin Iremonger—who are proving that the shrill Jeremiads have been as premature as they were ill-informed.

In short, the sources of imaginative writing in this country have not atrophied: there is an abundance, North and South, of the quick, moving, vital ingredients in people and in situation on which the artist must draw for significant creation. The American academists may consider, if they wish, that life in Western Europe and particularly in these islands that skirt the Continent, is running thin and that this anaemia is reflected by English and Irish writers. I repudiate that suggestion and its natural corollary that the New World will perforce be called on to redress the artistic balance of the Old. Certainly, in so far as the younger generation is concerned, the new Romanticism of the Forties, with its willing acceptance of death and its resultant eager acceptance of life goes far to displaying those "new styles of architecture, a change of heart" of which W. H. Auden so apocalyptically spoke in the lull before the Deluge.



BOOK REVIEW



MUNGO'S MANSION. A Play of Galway Life by Walter Macken.
(MacMillan. 5/-).

IT is seldom indeed that a first play shows its author to be so well acquainted with the craft of the theatre as in *Mungo's Mansion*. But Mr. Macken is a new-comer only to the English-speaking theatre; he has written several plays in Irish which have been performed in the Galway Lyric Theatre, where the author is actor as well as producer and manager.

The action of the play takes place in a Galway tenement where Mungo King, a docker, the father of eleven children, is recovering from a broken leg. He is enjoying his forced leisure, and belongs with zest to the hurly-burly life around him. His family, however, are more aware of the dirt and sweat of this existence, and the play is concerned with his children's efforts, eventually successful, in getting Mungo to consent to their removal to a new Council house. This is certainly no trivial subject but the author has relied too much on its social importance to generate any real dramatic excitement. The docker's evasions of family pressure are drawn out to the very utmost, and he is brought to his senses not in the way of comedy but through an encounter of painful melodrama, when he is left alone with a maniac neighbour who has just murdered his wife. As up to this point Mungo has been presented in almost every line as a figure of broad comedy, it is inevitable that in this scene the maniac should become no more than his comic foil. An unhappy lapse, the effect of which on Abbey audiences it is only too easy to imagine! (The play was produced there in 1946). It is all the more unfortunate as it is obvious that the author had no intention of callousness; he has observed his people shrewdly and kindly and listened to their speech with a faithful ear. Is it too much to expect that Mr. Macken and other young Irish dramatists will take as an example the work of Mr. Gerard Healy who broke from the present-day Abbey Theatre in a double sense with *The Black Stranger*—a play in which scenes of poverty are presented truthfully but with dignity and seriousness? In *Mungo's Mansion* there are indications of such a seriousness—by which one means not joylessness but a sense of responsibility to one's subject—and if the author is willing to submit to a sterner discipline one feels that he has it in him to produce work more challenging and more true.

T.S.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

SEAN O'CASEY: Born in Dublin, where he first received recognition. Since then his plays have become world-famous

ROBERT GREACEN: Born in Londonderry, 1921. Is married and lives in Dublin. Has contributed poetry and criticism to many Irish and English periodicals. Edited "Poems from Ulster," "Northern Harvest," "Lyra" (with A. Comfort), "Irish Harvest," etc.

MARY LAVIN: Made an instant reputation with her first book of short stories, "Tales from Bective Bridge." Has since published a novel and two further books of stories, the latest, "The Becker Wives (Heinemann), appearing last year. Lives in Co. Meath.

PATRICK GREER: Born in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia, of Irish parents. Left South Africa when a year old and since then has lived mainly in Ireland, working as clerk, salesman, farm labourer, and actor. Has contributed to "Penguin New Writing," "Irish Harvest"

FRANK PETERS: Born in Buttevant, Co. Cork. Is a teacher in Dublin. Has contributed to "The Bell" and "The Irish Press."

JIM PHELAN: Son of a Tipperary peasant, has been almost everything—actor, blacksmith, film-writer, prisoner, novelist, journalist, tramp. Prefers the last-named occupation. Has written eight novels and many short stories. His latest book, "Turf Fire Tales," is being published simultaneously in London, Paris, and New York.

MICHAEL J. MURPHY: Born in Liverpool, 1913, of South Armagh peasant stock. Returned to Armagh in 1922 and worked as farm-labourer and navy. Is now a collector for the Irish Folklore Commission. Lives in a mountain cabin doing free-lance writing and has contributed to "The Bell," "Dublin Magazine," B.B.C., etc.

VALENTIN IREMONGER: Born in Dublin, 1918. Awarded 1945 A. E. Memorial Prize for his unpublished book of poems, "Reservations." Has written feature scripts for Radio Eireann and the B.B.C., and has edited, with Robert Greacen, "An Anthology of Modern Irish Poetry," to be published this year. Now in the diplomatic service attached to headquarters in Dublin.

SEAMUS BYRNE: Born 1904. Educated in Blackrock College and National University of Ireland. Practised law for some years and then got involved in politics which cost him a few terms of imprisonment. Has written three plays and this is his first story to be published.

EWART MILNE: Born in Dublin, 1903, of an English father and an Irish mother. Has been a teacher and a sailor before the mast, and now lives in England. Has contributed to the leading British, American, and Irish periodicals and has had four books of poems published. A fifth, "Boding Day," is to be brought out this year by Frederick Muller, Ltd.

PADRAIC COLUM: Born in Longford, 1881. Was associated with W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory at the beginning of the Irish Theatre Movement, 1902, for which he wrote some plays. Besides many plays, has written novels, poems, essays, and short stories. Is a well-known lecturer and critic in America where he now lives.

OLIVER ST. JOHN GOGARTY: Born in 1878, and educated at Stonyhurst, Trinity College, Dublin, and at Oxford. Was Senator of Irish Free State from 1922 to 1936. Now lives in America.